

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

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VEDIC PRAYERS

देवान्वा यच्चकृमा कच्चिदागः

सखायं वा सदमित्रास्पतिं वा ।

इयं धीर्भूया अवयानमेषां द्यावा

रक्षतं पृथिवी नो अभ्वात् ॥

—Rg Veda, 1.185.8

O Dyāvā and Pṛthivī (ie, the gods of the heavens and the earth)! We keep on committing mistakes against the gods, against our dear friends, and against relatives—quarrelling, finding faults, insulting, etc. In order to be freed from such sins, we sing your praises and perform sacrifices. May our sacrifices be strong enough to remove all our numerous great sins. Please remove all our sins and protect us.

उभा शंसा नर्या मामविष्टा-

मुभे मामूती अवसा सचेताम्

भूरि चिदर्यः सुदास्तरा-

येषा मदंत इषयेम देवाः ॥

—Rg Veda, 1.185.9

May the most highly adorable gods, the saviours of human beings, Dyāvā and Pṛthivī, protect me. And, in order to protect as well as to provide worldly and otherworldly gains, may they become one with me. O Gods! We are your worshippers. We pray for plenty of food (ie, wealth) in order to please you by offering them to you.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

EDITORIAL

The King Sees a Dream

King Nebuchadnezzar had come all the way from Babylon and conquered Jerusalem. Being a Chaldean (one of the ancient Semetic races dominant in Babylonia then; also a language), he loved soothsaying, knowledge of the future, etc. His great curiosity about the future made him sleep over that thought one night. And God made the future known to him through a symbolic dream. The dream was profound but, unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar forgot all about it when he woke up.

How sad Nebuchadnezzar must've been! He called all his Chaldean soothsayers, magicians, etc, to the court and told them that he had forgotten a remarkable dream. He ordered them that they should tell him what it was. Not only that, he also wanted the Chaldeans to interpret the dream for him.

The soothsayers and magicians were shocked. They said: 'There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter. ... And it is a rare thing that the king requires and there is none other that can show it before the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh' (*Daniel*, 2.10,11). Nebuchadnezzar was furious. And he was neither ready for their desire to gain some time, nor was he ready to pardon them for their failure. He simply ordered that all the intellectuals of the city should be killed. Poor Chaldeans!

Such was King Nebuchadnezzar's love for the knowledge of the future. In fact, the name Nebuchadnezzar is a corrupt form of *Nabu-kudarri-uzzur*, meaning, 'O Nebo, protect my boundaries.' The ruling deity of the city of Borsippa, Babylon, was Nebo. Since Nebuchadnezzar was from Babylon, he had been named after that deity. 'Nebo' is a colloquial form of the Hebrew word *nabhi*, meaning 'prophet'. So, with 'prophet' appended to his

name, Nebuchadnezzar was naturally extremely curious about the future. And such a king had forgotten a wonderful dream. Won't he be furious?

One more point before telling you what happened later. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, he ordered that the best brains of Israel, born into noble lineages, should be captured and brought to the palace. Why? The new king wanted that these best brains should learn his native language, Chaldean, along with the art of soothsaying, forecasting the future, and so on. Many were captured. The king ordered that the food of his palace should be given to them. But there was one young Israelite, Daniel [renamed Belteshazzar after the Babylon deity Bel (Merdock) when captured], who refused to eat the king's food and preferred ordinary food. This pleased the God of Israel, and he bestowed supreme knowledge on Daniel.

Daniel Reveals the Truth

When the order was passed that all the intellectuals of Jerusalem should be killed, Daniel came to know of it. He was loved by many of the king's people for his piety. So he went to the authorities, asked them to withhold the action, and sought audience with the king. He told the king that he would narrate both the dream as well as its interpretation. Then he prayed to the God of Israel. God showed him what the dream was. So Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what the dream was:

O King, the thoughts came into your mind upon your bed as to what should come to pass hereafter; and he that reveals secrets made known to you what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed for any wisdom that I have more than any living creature, but for their sake that shall make known the interpretation to you... (cf. *Daniel*, 2.29,30).

Daniel went on to narrate the dream: 'You saw a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you and its form was terrible. The head of the image was of fine gold, his chest and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part iron and part clay. You saw the image till a huge boulder, without any hand to throw it, came and hit the feet of the image, made of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. Then the clay, iron, brass, silver, and gold parts were broken to pieces one by one, and they became chaff coming out of the threshing machine. And the wind carried them away and no place was found for them. And the stone that broke the image to pieces became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth' (cf. *Daniel*, 2.31-5).

That was the dream. What was its meaning? Daniel himself interpreted it, having been ordained by God: 'You, O King, are the head of gold (of that image) because God has given you kingdom, power, strength, and glory. After you, there shall come another kingdom which is inferior to yours, and a third one of brass which is still more inferior. These will rule the earth one after another. Finally, the fourth kingdom shall come, which shall be as strong as iron, for as much as iron breaks into pieces and subdues all things, that kingdom too shall break everything to pieces. The kingdom shall become divided into parts, but there shall be the strength of iron in it. Again, the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly weak, because the feet are made of clay and iron, and are divided. The last group of rulers of the earth, being like iron mixed with miry clay, shall mix with people; but they shall not cleave to one another, even as iron can't be mixed with clay.

'The stone next. When things come to such a pass, God Himself will come and set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. And that kingdom will not be given away to other people, but it shall conquer all the others and stand for ever' (cf. *Daniel*, 2.37-45).

After completing his interpretation, Daniel said firmly, for he had God's com-

mand: '...the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure' (*Daniel*, 2.45).

It is not clear if all that Daniel prophesied came true. But we now shift over to an altogether different venue, where the same ideas were expressed in a totally different form.

What the 'Puruṣa Sūkta' Says

In the tenth *maṇḍala* of the *Ṛg Veda*, there is an extraordinary hymn. That hymn is the 'Puruṣa Sūkta'. A mystical hymn through and through, the 'Puruṣa Sūkta' gives an account of the creation and maintenance of the universe, and of the Puruṣa, in a glorious manner. Puruṣa (simply translated as 'God') is also called Virāj, the collective gross manifestation of the Supreme, which we experience through the five senses. (Compare this with *viśva*, the individual gross manifestation.) The 'Puruṣa Sūkta' says that just one part of Virāj or Puruṣa has become everything that exists; the other three parts have become the heavens. He also transcends everything. It is from Him that the stars and sun and moon, the animals and birds and everything else is produced. It is from Him, again, that the sacrifice and the oblation, the hymns and the mantras, are produced. So Puruṣa is both immanent and transcendent. He is everything. This means that whatever is there is God and nothing else.

The 'Puruṣa Sūkta' then goes on to describe the Puruṣa as having a cosmic form. He is a huge person, having universal dimensions.

His face is the Brāhmaṇas. His arms are the Kṣatriyas. His thighs are the Vaiśyas. And His feet are the Śūdras. ('Puruṣa Sūkta', *Ṛg Veda*, 10.90.12).¹

What are these four terms, Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, etc? These are the four classes of human beings: the spiritual and intellectual group (Brāhmaṇas), the warrior group (Kṣatriyas), the business group (Vaiśyas), and the

1. ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीत् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।
ऊरु तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥

worker or labourer group (Śūdras). *This discussion has nothing to do with the Indian caste system of old: we should remember this.* This is a perfect division of the human tendency—we can include anyone into one of the four. These are the only four divisions possible, and the Indian sages have intelligently divided human beings into these broad groups. By saying that the four types of human beings became the four parts of the Puruṣa's cosmic body, the sage of the hymn means that all human beings go to form the body of the Puruṣa, but following a specific system.

What happened to Puruṣa of such a form later? It is said that the gods cut Him to pieces and offered them in the cosmic sacrifice one after another! What does this mean? According to the Indian spiritual tradition, the universe is a great sacrifice (*yajña*). *Yajña* means both giving and taking. The tree accepts manure, water, sunlight, etc, from the universe and gives leaves, fruits, flowers, firewood, etc in return. Everything is a sacrifice. Even an ant and an amoeba are participants in this cosmic sacrifice. If the universe is a cosmic cycle going on eternally, we are tiny parts of it. Why is this remarkable sacrifice going on? Call it God's sport or creation, or a plan to make us free and perfect.

We receive everything from the universe, and give what we can to it. The best sacrificer is one who gives more and receives less. To know how to give more and receive less, we should know *dharma*—the ideal of duty. It was the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas who discussed *dharma* beautifully. They showed the importance of *dharma*. That which inspires us into action is *dharma* (*codanā lakṣaṇo'rtho dharmah*)—be it heavenly joy or eternal peace.

Everyone of us—if we desire eternal happiness and perfection—should live according to the rules of *dharma*. Or else, we get bound to this world of suffering, and shall keep on coming and going: The instruments of sacrifice—ie, the world's goods—themselves may become attractions instead of becoming means of escape from misery.

When the 'Puruṣa Sūkta' says that the gods cut Puruṣa (the cosmic creation imagined as a Person) and offered Him into the cosmic sacrifice systematically, we shouldn't hazard the conclusion that they were destroying Him. The idea is this: the knowledge class, the warrior class, the business class and the labour class were given prominence one after the other; they were given the power to rule the world by turns. That is, each group ruled the earth for some time. That is the meaning. How did we arrive at this meaning? The next mantra of the hymn declares that the gods performed a 'sacrifice from this sacrifice' (*yajñena yajñam ayajanta devāḥ*). We've already said that the universe is a huge sacrifice. By bringing the four groups to prominence by turns, the gods set the cosmic sacrifice in motion.

Now, the democracy-proponents may ask, 'Why should the gods have put each class forward one after the other? Why couldn't they let everyone rule the world, or let everyone remain as they are?' Chaos wasn't the goal of the gods who created us. They wanted order and discipline. In fact, the gods were more democratic in giving chance to all the four groups by turns.

The four classes come one after the other to rule the world for the creation of *dharma*s or ideals (*tāni dharmāṇi prathamāni āsan*). By giving prominence to each individual group, the gods put forth their individual specialities or characteristics or *dharma*s at the forefront as the leading ideals of the world.

When the knowledge-loving mind ruled the world, it was the **golden** period because there was harmony, great love for true knowledge (which leads to liberation), and happiness everywhere. When the war-loving class ruled the world, it was the **silver** period because there were the cries of death and also of victory. During the third period, of the rule of the business-loving class, it was the **brass** period—plenty in some places but at the cost of others: Greed was the prime motive. So unrest always. Finally, when the service-loving class

ruled the world, it was the **iron** period: they wanted equal opportunity and so there was much bloodshed, ignorance, use of brute power, etc. Though the work-loving class is strong, for lack of knowledge they divide and re-divide and create unending conflicts.

What Do the Dream and Sūkta Say?

Thus the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the lover of knowledge, as well as the 'Puruṣa Sūkta' hint that there were four types of people ruling the world one after another. Did such a thing actually happen? To know this, we should go to Swami Vivekananda. He declares:

According to the prevalence, in greater or lesser degree, of the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas in man, the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, are everywhere present at all times, in all civilised societies. By the mighty hand of time, their number and power also vary at different times in regard to different countries. In some countries the numerical strength or influence of one of these castes may preponderate over another; at some period, one of the classes may be more powerful than the rest. But from a careful study of the history of the world, it appears that in conformity to the law of nature the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra do, in every society, one after another in succession, govern the world (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 449).

Who Were the Rulers?

We thus understand that both Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the Puruṣa Sūkta prophecy came true. But who were the rulers that ruled the world in this way? The Vedic Aryans (even Emperor Ashoka!) belong to the first group of Brāhmaṇas, ie, the 'golden head' period. Later came the long rule of numerous dynasties—the Kṣatriya or the 'silver chest' period. Next came the colonial rule, the British ruling the world—the rule of the Vaiśyas or the 'brass' period. The fourth group—the 'iron-plus-clay' period—was the communist period. We saw their rule very recently.

The Satya Yuga Begins

What next? Going back to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we remember Daniel's statement that a huge stone comes from nowhere and destroys everything to dust. That 'stone' will rule the world without handing over powers to any group. He says: **'When things come to such a pass, God Himself will come and set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.'**

In the 'Puruṣa Sūkta', it is declared in the end: ***'Te ha nākaṁ mahimānaḥ sacante, yatra pūrve sādhyāḥ santi devāḥ.*** After this, all those **who perform sacrifice will be in a painless, eternally happy heaven, where reside the glorious people of the past and the gods.'**

The Lord has at long last arrived! The Age of Truth, Satya Yuga, has begun once again. Let's all benefit from this age! □

The Need for Meditation

So long as enjoyment is sought, bondage remains. Only imperfection can enjoy, because enjoyment is the fulfilling of desire. The human soul enjoys nature. The underlying reality of nature, soul, and God is Brahman; but It (Brahman) is unseen, until we bring It out. It may be brought out by Pramantha or friction, just as we can produce fire by friction. The body is the lower piece of wood, Om is the pointed piece and Dhyana (meditation) is the friction. When this is used, that light which is the knowledge of Brahman will burst forth in the soul.

—Swami Vivekananda

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

Bhagavati was Bhagavati Indeed!

Aurangzeb—one of the most fanatical rulers of India—had appointed numerous supervisors, called Subedars, to look after different regions. Like their master, these Subedars too were intolerant and greedy, and made it their favourite pastime to desecrate religious places, kill innocent people, take away Hindu women, and loot wealth. In Bihar, there was an old Subedar; he went on a boating trip one day. On the way, he saw a young lady returning home. He enquired and found out that she was the village chief Thakur Horil Singh's sister, Bhagavati. The Subedar went to the chief, and told him plainly: 'Send your sister to me.' Horil was enraged. He instantly took out his sword and thundered: 'You old idiot! How dare you say such a thing!' The supervisor was terrified. But his soldiers overpowered Horil from behind. He was imprisoned and a message was sent to his family. Horil's wife was helpless, but Bhagavati hit upon a plan. She ran to the Subedar and pretended to be jubilant: 'Oh! I'm overjoyed to be your Begum. Kindly release my brother. I shall follow you.' The grinning supervisor released Horil. Though Horil was shocked at his sister's behaviour, she never seemed to care. She said: 'I can't travel by boat. Kindly order a palanquin for me.' That was done. She began her journey. On the way they reached a lake. Bhagavati said: 'I am thirsty. I shall go and drink some water.' When the Subedar said he would bring water himself, she politely said no. She went to the lake, prayed to Mother Durga with folded hands, and jumped in. The Subedar waited for some time, and when Bhagavati never returned, began searching for her. She wasn't found. When the news reached Horil, the entire village followed him, and they fished out the dead body of Bhagavati. Even as the villagers wept, the scared Subedar ran away. A *Sati-cowrā* or 'Holy-Lady Corner' was built at the spot where she was cremated, and that became a pilgrim centre for long (cf. *Kalyan*, 'Nāri Añk', pp. 592-3).

Akbar's Change of Attitude

Akbar began frequenting the shrine of Khwaja Muinud-Din Chishti at Ajmir since January 1562. In March 1562, Merta, the key to Marwar, Rajasthan, was captured with the help of Akbar's Rajput supporters. This made a deep impression on Akbar's mystic mind, and after his return from the Ajmir pilgrimage he prohibited the enslavement of prisoners of war and their forcible conversion to Islam on humanitarian grounds. In March 1564 Akbar lifted *jizya* (poll-tax) on Hindus. Akbar again visited Ajmir in September 1577. At Bhira, while returning via the Panjab, he organized a large hunting expedition called a *qamargha*, in which wild animals were trapped by encirclement. During this he experienced a fit of ecstasy under a tree, which revolutionized his spiritual life. He grew convinced, as Badauni says, that all religions contained some truth and that this was not the prerogative of Islam (cf. S.A.A. Rizvi, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 106-8).

Sri Ramakrishna and Our Stranded Freudian Writers

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj is the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. A world-renowned scholar and spiritual leader, with numerous books to his credit, Revered Maharaj has been a harbinger of peace in this trouble-torn world. Here are some of his thoughts about a controversial work, written by one of a tiny group of malicious persons.

The Calcutta daily, *The Statesman*, of 5 June 2000, has published in its editorial page itself, along with a photo of Sri Ramakrishna, a review by Rajat Kanti Ray of a book by Nrisingha P. Sil, titled *Ramakrishna Revisited: A New Biography*. The writer and a few other psychoanalysts like Jeffry K. Kripal, the author of *Kali's Child: The Mystical and Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, are followers of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, who peeped a little into the human psyche while studying the dreams of his mentally disturbed patients, and discovered that the human psyche is full of sexuality and violence. The above writers have remained stagnant at that level, though later western psychologists and psychoanalysts have gone deeper into the human psyche and discovered many other dimensions.

Freud's own co-worker Carl Jung has severely criticised Freud in his famous book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (pp. 12-3):

The view that dreams are merely imaginary fulfilments of suppressed wishes has long ago been superseded. It is certainly true that there are dreams which embody suppressed wishes and fears, but what is there which the dream cannot on occasion embody? Dreams may give expression to ineluctable truths, to philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, anticipations, irrational experiences, even telepathic visions, and

heaven knows what besides. One thing we ought never to forget: almost the half of our lives is passed in a more or less unconscious state. The dream is specifically the utterance of the unconscious.

Pleading for the recognition of the presence of something higher than mere instincts in the unconscious, Jung says (*ibid*, pp. 136-7):

I do not doubt that the natural instincts of drives are forces of propulsion in human life, whether we call them sexuality or the will to power, but I also do not doubt that these instincts come into collision with the spirit, for they are continually colliding with something, and why should not this something be called spirit? I am far from knowing what spirit is in itself, and equally far from knowing what instincts are. The one is as mysterious to me as the other, yet I am unable to dismiss the one by explaining it in terms of the other. ... They are terms that we allow to stand for powerful forces whose nature we do not know.

And protesting against Freud's view of the sexuality of the human psyche, Jung says (*ibid*, pp. 138-41):

I hold that psychic energy involves the play of opposites in much the same way as physical energy involves a difference of potential. ... What I seek is to set bounds to the rampant terminology of sex which threatens to vitiate all discussion of the human psyche; I wish to put sexuality itself

in its proper place. Common sense will always return to the fact that sexuality is only one of the life-instincts—only one of the psycho-physiological functions—though one that is without doubt very far-reaching and important.

There is nothing that can free us from this bond except that opposite urge of life, the spirit. It is not the children of the flesh, but the 'Children of God' who know freedom. ... That is what Freud would never learn, and what all those who share his outlook forbid themselves to learn. At least they never find the key to this knowledge. ... We moderns are faced with the necessity of rediscovering the life of the spirit; we must experience it anew for ourselves. It is the only way in which we can break the spell that binds us to the cycle of biological events.

... As for Freud's idea of 'super-ego', it is a furtive attempt to smuggle in his time-honoured image of Jehovah in the dress of psychological theory. When one does things like that, it is better to say so openly.

Explaining the proper scientific approach to the study of the human psyche, Jung continues (*ibid*, p. 141):

It is permissible for science to divide its field of enquiry and to set up limited hypotheses, for science must work in that way; but the human psyche may not be parcelled out. It is a whole which embraces consciousness, and is the mother of consciousness. Scientific thought, being only one of its functions, can never exhaust all the possibilities of life. The psychotherapist must not allow his vision to be coloured by the glasses of pathology; he must never allow himself to forget that the ailing mind is a human mind, and that, for all its ailments, it shares in the whole of the psychic life of man.

Sri Ramakrishna was highly respected by his prominent contemporaries in Calcutta, like Keshab Chandra Sen, Shibnath Sastri, and Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Within

ten years of his passing away, Professor Max Muller of the Oxford University wrote an article on him in a London journal, and four years later, Romain Rolland of France, a Nobel Prize winner, wrote a life of Sri Ramakrishna and a life of Swami Vivekananda; in the first book he presented both as the *splendid symphony of the Universal Soul*.

TRIBUTES OF SOME WORLD THINKERS TO SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Romain Rolland

'I am bringing to Europe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna. ... The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods. ... "I am more ancient than the radiant Gods. I am the first-born of the Being. I am the artery of Immortality." It is my desire to bring the sound of the beating of that artery to the ears of fever-stricken Europe, which has murdered sleep. I wish to wet its lips with the blood of Immortality.'

Nicholas de Roerich

'We are in the desert of Mongolia.... Thoughts turned to the radiant giant of India—Sri Ramakrishna. Around this glorious name there are so many respectful definitions. Sri, Bhagavan, Paramahansa—all best offerings through which the people wish to express their esteem and reverence. The consciousness of a nation knows how to bestow names of honour. And after all, above all most venerable

titles, there remains over the whole world the one great name—Ramakrishna. The personal name has already changed into a great all-national, universal concept. Who has not heard the Blessed Name!’

Mahatma Gandhi

‘The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face.’

Richard Schiffman

(In his *Sri Ramakrishna—A Prophet for the New Age*, published by Paragon House, USA.)

‘Over a century since his passing, the great prophet Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa remains one of the most profoundly beloved figures in India. Of all the nations of the world, India alone seems to possess the ripened wisdom to honour him above all other men. And what exactly did India see in this unformed son of a peasant and heedless madman of God? In our efforts to understand Sri Ramakrishna, we must try to understand India.’

Lex Hixon

(In his *Great Swan—Meetings with Ramakrishna*, published by Shambhala Publications Inc, Boston, USA.)

‘By meeting Ramakrishna, which is possible here and now, we enter a unique realm of experience where the wisdom Goddess reigns—the one Ramakrishna calls *my blissful Mother*. The wonderful nature of this realm cannot be analysed, yet it describes itself. The present volume contains that mysterious description—not only in words, which are merely instruments, but as the living presence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Great

Swan, the God-intoxicated sage of Bengal.’

Rabindranath Tagore

‘To the Paramahansa Deva’

*Diverse courses of worship
from varied springs of fulfilment
have mingled in your meditation.*

*The manifold revelation of the joy of the Infinite
has given form to a shrine of unity in your life
where from far and near arrive salutations
to which I join mine own.*

Against this background, these psycho-analytic writers appear like, as one of Sri Ramakrishna’s parables says, ‘brinjal sellers appraising a diamond.’

The study of human nature in the light of physics and physiology in the nineteenth century had yielded the psychology of behaviourism. That was human psyche viewed *from the outside*. Through the study of dreams, initiated by Freud and his school, the study of human nature in its depths began to be undertaken, blazing the trail for a study of the psyche *from the inside*. The first impact of this penetration into the unconscious through the study of dreams was, however, unfortunate, from the point of view of the growth of reason. For it resulted in the submergence of reason in unreason and the presentation of human nature in the darkest colours. The unconscious was presented by Freud as shot through with sexuality and violence. The outlook and temper so generated infected literature and art, politics and social life for several decades. The apotheosis of the irrational man led to the lowering of morals due to the weakening of the will to check innate impulses and drives. □

The Power of the Incarnations

Prophets preach, but the Incarnations like Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna, can give religion; one glance, one touch is enough. That is the power of the Holy Ghost, the ‘laying on of hands’; the power was actually transmitted to the disciples by the Master—the ‘chain of Guru-power’. That, the real baptism, has been handed down for untold ages.

—Swami Vivekananda

Swami Yogananda: Holy Mother's Attendant

PRAVRAJIKA VIRAJAPRANA

Pravrajika Virajaprana is a nun of the Convent attached to the Vedanta Society of Northern California, USA. In this remarkable article, based on her talk delivered on Swami Yogananda, Virajapranaji vividly portrays the life of the great monk. For want of space, we shall publish this article in parts.

Swami Shivananda (Mahapurush Maharaj), one of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples, once said to a monk: 'What kind of scriptures are you reading? Can you read our lives? Our lives *are* the Upanishads. You will find [within our lives] the essence of the scriptures. As a matter of fact, if one reads the life stories of illumined souls, which are verily the Vedas, one will automatically understand the spirit of the scriptures.' Swami Shivananda has given us a profound instruction through this conversation of his. The Upanishads contain the mystical revelations of saints and seers. The truth embedded in these scriptures is subtle and difficult to understand unless the ground has been prepared; the mind has to be purified through sustained spiritual effort to be able to grasp the real meaning of the scriptures. The path is 'sharp as the edge of a razor and difficult to cross, so say the wise.'

Our teachers say that one of the best ways of preparing the mind to receive the truth is to observe and study the lives of enlightened persons. Why is this so? One reason is that we can observe these subtle truths embodied in someone else in a very practical way. 'Our lives are the Upanishads,' Swami Shivananda said. These truths are not just intellectual concepts but living truths that can be actualized in our lives here and now. However, we need to see these subtle spiritual realities played out in the lives of others in order to relate them to our lives and level of practice. From our ordinary experience we have no other way of relating to the spiritual dimension or to even know of its existence, because that experience

is beyond sense perception or cognition. Arjuna has such a question in mind when he asks Sri Krishna (*Gita*, 2.54): 'How can we recognize a person of steady wisdom? How does he interact with others? What is his experience, and how does it affect his everyday life?' What can we learn about our spiritual goal from such a person's life?

Sri Krishna responds by describing how an illumined person lives in the world and how he appears to others. Such a person is desireless, finds satisfaction in his spiritual Self alone, is unagitated by adversity, does not run after happiness, is free from attachment, fear, and anger; though moving continuously among sense objects, the turbulent senses are completely restrained and withdrawn from their objects, even the inclination for sense experience is erased from his mind; the wise one is cheerful, serene under all circumstances—favourable or otherwise—secure, free from all sorrow, his intelligence is completely steady, full of peace and joy. Sri Krishna concludes by telling Arjuna that the desireless person alone is tranquil; in him 'all desires enter as the waters enter the ocean, which is full to the brim and grounded in stillness.' He has no ambition for things of this world, no wish to be heard, to put himself or his opinion forward. The person who lives completely free from desires, without the idea of, 'it's mine,' becomes peaceful. This is the state of Brahman. Attaining it, one is no longer deluded.

Swami Shivananda's advice, and certainly Sri Krishna's reply to Arjuna, seem to

be reason enough to accept the personal value of studying the lives of spiritual masters. However, let's look at a few more reasons just to make our case complete. Inspiration is another vital reason for us. As spiritual seekers, I think it is true to say that most of us need inspiration and encouragement to keep trudging along the path, which seems interminably long at times. Genuine inspiration can only be had from a source that is rooted in infinite consciousness. Until we have realized the Truth in our own heart, this need is there. Our consciousness seems to be on a sliding scale that wavers, going up and down during our years of sadhana, until it permanently goes up and stays there, a state which we seekers are all striving for in one way or the other. Or you may prefer to think of it in terms a vaster state of being, into the infinite. But no matter how we look at it, we have to transform our consciousness. Our awareness has to become divine awareness, which according to Vedanta is recognizing what we already are, the infinite being, ever pure and blissful. Great souls are our guides in this inner journey.

Swami Yogananda's birthday falls on Phalguna Krishna Chaturthi, 13 March this year. Of Sri Ramakrishna's direct monastic disciples, Swami Yogananda's life is perhaps the most obscure. This is undoubtedly due at least in part to his reserved unassuming temperament, and further by his early death at the age of 38 in March 1899. He was the first of the monastic disciples to pass away. The swami also was not a scholar; he did not write any books, give lectures, engage in preaching, undertake any spectacular activities, nor leave behind any formal teachings, but he *lived* an intensely spiritual life. Here and there from different published and unpublished accounts of his life, and reminiscences of his brother disciples and others who knew him, we get bits and pieces of information that when put together, like pieces of a puzzle, reveal an extraordinary soul.

First of all, I would like to mention a few highlights about the swami, his personality

and character, then give a brief overview of his life up to Sri Ramakrishna's *mahāsamādhi*, especially focusing on what we can learn from him during this period, his relationship with Holy Mother, which is the most outstanding and prominent aspect of his life, and simultaneously the role he played in the early history of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Sri Ramakrishna classed Swami Yogananda as an *isvarakoti*. This esoteric classification is not something that we can analyse from our vantage point. It is one of several mystical aspects of the swami's life which indicate his unusually high spiritual status in the eyes of Sri Ramakrishna. According to Sri Ramakrishna, an *isvarakoti* is a liberated soul of the highest class, a being who is eternally free from the bondage of karma and who allows himself to be reborn simply to do good to mankind. So an *isvarakoti*, unlike a *jivakoti* who is born as a result of past karma, is a *nityasiddha*—ever-free, ever-perfect—or *dhyānasiddha*, perfect in meditation. *Isvarakotis*, untainted by attachment and free from worldliness, have no axe to grind, nothing personal whatsoever to gain from embodiment. They do not require sadhana for their personal liberation; all of their spiritual practices are for the benefit of others. Such persons have some of the actual characteristics of the avatar; they are part of his being. *Isvarakotis* are extensions, you might say, of an Incarnation of God. Sri Ramakrishna recognized six souls as having come to this realm to work with him for the good of the world.

In other traditions we find similar relationships between an Incarnation or highly evolved souls and their disciples who were designated by divine will to help in disseminating religion; such as, Lord Buddha and his disciple Ananda, Sri Chaitanya and Nityananda, and Jesus Christ and St Peter. In Buddhism the *bodhisattva* and in Jainism the *jina* are akin to an *isvarakoti* in terms of his or her role in helping spiritual seekers along the path. While reflecting on Swami Yogananda's life, it is helpful to remember that he was an *isvara-*

koti, however we wish to understand the term.

Another fascinating detail concerning the swami is that both Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother considered him to be an incarnation of Arjuna, the companion and disciple of Sri Krishna. At first glance it is hard to imagine Swami Yogananda, who was so gentle and tenderhearted that he couldn't even kill a cockroach which Sri Ramakrishna had asked him to do, to be Arjuna, the great warrior hero of the *Mahābhārata*. Yet, as we shall see, the swami had another side to his personality. He was a great hero, not necessarily physically on the battlefield; but on the battlefield of mind he was unsurpassed. Swami Shivananda said: 'Swami Yogananda used to meditate a great deal and his eyes would become red as a result. The Master said that he had eyes like those of Arjuna.'

There are two other descriptions of the swami worth mentioning. Akshay Kumar Sen, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the author of *Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*, described the swami in this quaint but beautiful way: 'Simple by nature, always bearing a smiling face, he had beautiful shining eyes which I had hardly come across anywhere and there was something which would impel one to stare at him again and again. His eyes were large and broad with a slight slant upwards and reaching, as it were, nearly as far as the tips of the ears. His eyebrows curved like a bow; his was a charming face indeed. Such eyes are not found among common men. The more one looked at them the more one felt inclined to see them day and night.' The other description comes from Bhavatarini, a woman disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who was initiated as a young girl and was later married to Upendra Nath, another of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples. Sri Ramakrishna was very close to Bhavatarini and her family and in fact it was he that suggested to her mother that her daughter marry Upendra. Bhavatarini knew Swami Vivekananda and met many of the other direct disciples. She called Swami Yogananda, Yogendadada (older brother): 'Yogendadada was

seven years older than my husband. He was very tall and thin but what *beautiful* eyes he had! Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] used to say: "his eyes are like the eyes of Arjuna." And Sri Ma [Holy Mother] used to say: "My Yogen is like the friend of Krishna who used to hold a bow which he called Gandiva. For establishing the kingdom of wisdom and truth, he has come again as a companion of God."'

There are only three photographs of the swami that we know of, none of which do justice to the above descriptions. Two of them were taken at the time of Sri Ramakrishna's *mahasamadhi* in August 1886. One can see the tall, thin, slightly bent figure of Swami Yogananda standing at the head of Sri Ramakrishna's bed. Naturally, the disciples were all grief-stricken at this time; the swami's vacant expression and listless stance reflect this mood. He was twenty-five years old when Sri Ramakrishna passed away. The third photo, which is a group photo of some of the disciples, was taken in Calcutta in 1896, just before Swami Abhedananda sailed for London to help Swami Vivekananda with his work there. This photo, the only one circulated of the swami, shows him standing wearing a long robe, arms at his side, a lock of hair curled over his forehead, a moustache, and with an inscrutable Oriental expression on his face. Though the photo is not very clear, one can imagine what he looked like from the above descriptions.

By nature the swami was gentle, calm, taciturn, and extremely tender-hearted, generous and kind to everyone, especially anyone in need. One of his brother disciples remarked, 'We never saw him becoming angry or using harsh words even when there was a good reason for it.' Yet, oddly enough, he had a very critical outlook that spared neither Swami Vivekananda nor even Sri Ramakrishna himself. Like his guru, he was unusually intelligent with a sharp discriminating mind. Always austere in his personal habits, he was the embodiment of purity. He loved solitude and preferred only a few books—the

Gita, Upanishads, and others. Sri Ramakrishna's disciples are like different flowers in a bouquet. Each one has something unique to contribute that adds to the beauty of the whole arrangement. The different disciples embody various characteristics of the many-sided genius of Sri Ramakrishna. With deep appreciation, Swami Saradananda, who himself was in a position to evaluate the swami's spiritual greatness, said about him: 'A yogi, like Yogindra, having the experience of samadhi, possessed of intense detachment and equally qualified for devotion and divine knowledge, is scarcely seen.'

Swami Yogananda was born in 1861 into an old wealthy, aristocratic religious family in the village of Dakshineswar. He was the only disciple of Sri Ramakrishna that was born and raised in Dakshineswar. His home is within walking distance of the Kali Temple and the sacred river Ganga. Even now his ancestral home is there; the compound is quite large, though only part of it has been preserved in his memory. The tenants who live there allow devotees and admirers to visit the swami's room. The 'inscrutable Oriental photo' is hanging on one of the walls and some of his personal items are here and there in the room.

Yogin's father, Navin Chandra Roy Chaudhury, was a devout brahmin who spent a great deal of his time in spiritual practices and held many religious festivals in his home. Sri Ramakrishna was a frequent visitor to Navin's home during occasions when the *Srimad Bhāgavata* and other sacred books were read. Whenever there were group meetings of this kind in the surrounding neighbourhood, Sri Ramakrishna would often attend. Thus he became known in and around Dakshineswar and to the Roy Chaudhury family in particular.

Yogin's innate spiritual tendencies manifested when he was about five years old. He would often become overwhelmed with spiritual emotions and, even while playing with his friends, would get intensely serious and withdrawn; then retiring to a solitary place, he

would become all the more so.

As Yogin grew up his spiritual nature blossomed. Meditation, worship, reading of the *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, and other scriptures filled his days. He joyously attended recitations of the *Bhāgavata* and *kirtans*. He was fond of devotional music throughout his life. Yogindranath often accompanied his father to the temple garden of Rani Rasmani to gather flowers for worship or to bathe in the Ganga; so the speculation is that he must have seen Sri Ramakrishna many times as a small boy. In fact, once when he was roaming in the garden, he mistook Sri Ramakrishna for a gardener and asked him to pick some flowers for him. Delighted, Sri Ramakrishna agreed. Later, much to his chagrin, Yogin recognized who the gardener had been. He had heard about Sri Ramakrishna from his neighbours, but his reputation as an eccentric priest dampened his enthusiasm; Sri Ramakrishna just didn't appeal to him. Furthermore, he was shy and avoided meeting people as much as possible.

Yogin attended a Christian missionary school not far from Dakshineswar; it was during his last year at this school that a turning point came in his life: he met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time. He had read an article about the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in a journal of the Brahmo Samaj leader Keshab Chandra Sen. Keshab Sen was well-known then as a religious reformer and held the respect of many young educated people, especially in Bengal. Keshab's article sparked Yogin's interest and he resolved to visit Sri Ramakrishna. When he arrived in the temple compound and made his way to Sri Ramakrishna's room, he found the place was full to overflowing with Brahmo devotees. Feeling shy, he just stood quietly outside on the porch and listened to the wonderful spiritual conversation within the room. He was amazed that this man was the gardener and also the man whom his friends called the 'mad priest.' He just couldn't believe it. In his inimitable way, Sri Ramakrishna asked a devotee 'to invite those people inside who are standing out on

the porch.' 'Those people' consisted only of Yogin. The young boy entered the room and soon was completely transfixed by Sri Ramakrishna's simple explanation of subtle spiritual truths. When the others left, Sri Ramakrishna charmingly cast his net over him. He immediately recognized Yogin's tremendous spiritual potential. When he found out that his father was Navin Roy Chaudhury, Sri Ramakrishna told him that he knew his father quite well and that he used to visit their house frequently to listen to readings from the scriptures. After talking intimately for some time, Sri Ramakrishna told Yogin to visit him again. Yogin agreed. After all what else could he do, he had been caught in the net!

Although Yogin's family respected Sri Ramakrishna, they were suspicious of him because of his unconventional behaviour during his sadhana period. Not being able to evaluate Sri Ramakrishna spiritual states, many people thought he was insane. Therefore in order to avoid friction within his family, Yogin began to visit Sri Ramakrishna secretly. Around this time a *hatha yogi* was living in the temple compound near the Panchavati. Observing the yogi closely, Yogin became curious if he might know a method for controlling lust. Then one day Yogin asked Sri Ramakrishna: 'Sir, could you teach me how to conquer lust?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, giving him a simple advice: 'Chant the name of the Lord, and it will vanish.' Hearing this unsophisticated reply, Yogin concluded that Sri Ramakrishna simply didn't know any suitable method. Unconvinced, he returned to the yogi. As Sri Ramakrishna was strolling by, he noticed Yogin and, taking him by the hand, led him away, cautioning him that if he followed the yogi's techniques he would get entangled in body consciousness. But Yogin's critical mind rebelled; not only that, he thought Sri Ramakrishna was jealous of the yogi and was trying to keep him from running away. Eventually, Yogin decided to experiment by trying what Sri Ramakrishna had suggested. He began to practice japa with a deeply concentrated mind

and to his astonishment, he shortly thereafter began to experience the efficacy of Sri Ramakrishna's advice. Swami Vivekananda paid one of the highest tributes to Yogin's purity of character when he remarked, 'If there is anyone amongst us who has conquered lust in all its respects, it is Yogin.'

Yogin's constant contact with Sri Ramakrishna revolutionized his life. God-realization became all in all for him. Although he knew that in time his studies would be financially advantageous to his family, he could not focus his mind on worldly pursuits. He had learned from Sri Ramakrishna that renunciation of lust and greed was the main objective; hence he made a firm resolve *never* to marry.

Now the Divine Mother *really* began enjoying her play. Yogin increased his visits to Sri Ramakrishna. His indifference to his studies and other affairs greatly concerned his family, but initially they left him alone. Some of his friends ridiculed him because of his relationship with Sri Ramakrishna; they thought that he was wasting his precious time. Soft-spoken and gentle, Yogin withdrew from all of them. Recognizing that his academic career was hopeless, he decided he should do something to help his father financially, since by this time he was practically bankrupt because he had mismanaged his property. Yogin went to live with one of his uncles with the idea of looking for a job, sort of. He tried but failing to find employment, reverted to his natural bent of mind—spiritual practice. As he began to spend more time in meditation, his uncle naturally became alarmed and wrote to his father that the only solution to straighten him out was to get him married—a solution that seems to be uppermost in the minds of the parents and relatives of quite a few saints. Maybe the ensuing tussle is what canonizes them ultimately.

There are two striking incidents in Swami Yogananda's life when he acted innocently on a pretext which dramatically changed his life thereafter. The first one was his marriage. Navin immediately began making arrange-

ments for Yogin's marriage and then wrote to his brother-in-law telling him to send Yogin home right away ostensibly because his mother was sick. Yogin was deeply devoted to his mother, so this news upset him terribly. He rushed to Dakshineswar only to find his entire family happily planning the wedding ceremony. Dismayed and shocked beyond belief at this turn of events, Yogin, though usually reticent, flatly refused to marry. His father pleaded with him, pointing out the awkwardness of telling the bride-to-be's family, but Yogin vehemently dug in his heels. As far as he was concerned, the heated discussion had ended. But his father didn't give up; he furthered his argument by telling Yogin that he would be disgraced if he stopped the arrangements that had progressed so far. The argument continued back and forth, until finally Yogin's mother entered the picture; she cried and carried on, pleading with him to marry for her sake, if for no other reason. That was too much for Yogin's tender heart. His mother's heart-rending appeal undermined his resolution. Brokenhearted, he married.

The second incident that duped Yogin was Sri Ramakrishna's accusation that he had not returned some money to a man from the Kali Temple, who had given Yogin a few coins to purchase some articles for Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna used this ploy to get Yogin to visit him. After Yogin's marriage, he was so ashamed and crestfallen over his predicament that he stopped visiting Sri Ramakrishna completely. Yogin described his agonizing mental condition: 'As soon as I married, the thought came to me that the hope of God-realization was now a mockery. Why should I go to the Master, whose very first teaching was the renunciation of lust and gold? I have ruined my life because of the tenderness of my heart. It

cannot be reversed. The sooner I die the better for me. I used to visit the Master daily; but after this event, I stopped going to him altogether and spent my days in utter despair and repentance.' Though extremely softhearted, Yogin had another side: his strong independence. Compelled to marry, his restless spirit longed to break out of the cage more forcefully than ever. He would spend his evenings pacing on the roof, completely ignoring his wife. Throughout this fiery ordeal his character remained spotless, not even a ripple of worldliness ever arose in his mind. Swami Shivananda said that Yogin was Shukadeva himself, the embodiment of purity.

Sri Ramakrishna knew that Yogin had married and, having repeatedly sent for him to no avail, finally used the money excuse to shame Yogin into coming. It worked. Yogin's pride and self-respect were sorely wounded. Sri Ramakrishna asked Upendra Nath to bring Yogin to him. On the way Yogin unburdened his mind; he resented being insulted and had resolved that after returning the money he would leave—that would be his final visit. As Yogin approached Sri Ramakrishna's room, he quickly came forward saying, 'So what if you have married. I am also married. Why should you be afraid? Through God's grace hundreds of marriages will never be an obstruction for you.' These reassuring words stunned Yogin; the cloud of darkness lifted, letting in a flood of light. When he referred to the payment of the balance, Sri Ramakrishna wouldn't even listen to him. A huge weight fell from his heart; joyfully bowing to Sri Ramakrishna, he felt his relationship with his guru was re-established. Once again Yogin resumed his visits to his beloved teacher.

(To be concluded)

'Let all the movements of my mind be offerings at Your feet. Let my speech be devoted to the recital of your name and excellences. Let my hands be engaged in Your services. May my eyes ever see Your images.... May my ears ever hear Your glory. Therefore, O Rama, destroy my ignorance,' says Sugriva to Rama in the *Adhyatma Ramayana*.

Human Values: Definition and Characteristics

DR DEBABRATA PAHARI

Dr Debabrata Pahari is a young philosopher from Calcutta. In this scholarly article, Dr Pahari discusses human values from both the traditional and modern viewpoints.

Thinkers of different classes and schools have used the concept of human values in various senses. For example, scientists use the phrase to refer to their scientific inventions and processes of inventions. Technologists like to account it to denote technological skills and their valuable applications for the welfare of society. The idealists, on the other hand, indicate 'human values' to imply their ideals and the proper application of these ideals in human life, so as to promote cultured social behaviour with an ideological background. As a result of this diversity of usage, various definitions have been given by different thinkers, both Indian and Western.

Some writers define human values as the emotional behaviour of individuals in their performance of duties in different organizations. Some others define it as the ideals given by national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, etc. Some writers define human values as their scientific inventions for the welfare and expansion of the society and organization.

However, Indian thinkers define human values as the path to attain the supreme goal of life, called *mokṣa* or *amṛtatva* or *apavarga* (ie, freedom from sorrow and suffering). Therefore, the concept of dharma has been defined by Kaṇāda, in his *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra* (1.1.2) thus: 'Yato-abhyudaya niḥśreyasa-siddhiḥ sa dharmah, That which is the cause of uplift (*abhyudaya*) and liberation (*niḥśreyasa*) is dharma.' Moreover, Vyāsa has stated the following aphorism: 'Dharmē ca arthe ca kāmē ca mokṣe ca bhartaṣabha...', which means that 'the real function of dharma, *artha*, and *kāma* is to derive *mokṣa*....'

However, all these definitions of human values seem to be one-sided and narrow. For, these definitions do not cover all the characteristic features of values. We may, therefore, define values thus: 'Values are such attributes of human individuals, which take into account the bodily, recreational, associational, economic and characteristic performances or behaviours of human beings for the development of the organization or society or nation par excellence.' In other words, 'human values are such excellences of men or social individuals which are manifested in their bodily, recreational, associational, economic and characteristic frameworks for the welfare of the society and nations.'

There are five marks or notable points in the stated definition of values. These are as follows: (1) Values include bodily activities or behaviours of human beings; (2) Values include the recreational qualities of human beings for their development as well as the development of the society; (3) Values count the associational qualities of human beings to form social unity; (4) Values deal with the character of the individual; (5) Values deal with the economic base or structure of the society. Therefore, to build up a suitable economic structure of the society, values demand the services of man—his recreational acts, associational abilities, bodily activities, and moral capabilities. Through this service the moral or ethical nature of man is revealed, and a suitable economic structure of the society is built up.

However, the definitions stated, and the marks of human values mentioned lead us to formulate some characteristic features. These

are the following:

In the first place, values are primarily concerned with social individuals who bear organic relations with the society. So they are subjective in nature. This subjective nature is manifested in the world of objects through the agency of social individuals in contact with different social organizations, such as banks, schools, colleges, etc.

Secondly, the recreational aspect of the social individuals is manifested in the society through different working relationships. With the formation of working relations, organizations remain as central places where the development of one's moral character and rationality will also take place.

Thirdly, human values being organic by nature, they hold a relative relationship with the positive and negative aspects of the material world.

Fourthly, human values also possess the social aspect of individuals. Their social nature is revealed in the ethical behaviour with their neighbours and others. Human desire being hedonistic, the ethical ideal would be the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. This will bring unity, which is the highest gain in one's moral life and activities. In this way, the social nature of man will turn up his spirituality through the service of moral and ethical values.

Fifthly, the relative and absolute natures of human rationality are manifested through the character or rational will of individuals with other personalities of the society. There-

fore the values of character, economy and association are accounted as components of human values.

Sixthly, human values include recreational nature of man also. Thus, scientists and technologists of all ages demand values for their contributions to the welfare of man and society.

Seventhly, the fundamental character of an individual are manifested in his bodily behaviour: his relationship with other personalities. Human conduct directs man's behaviour by the dictation of his will in the light of reason, which is the main task of ethics. Therefore the basic nature of values can be understood only through the study of ethics.

Lastly, human values being the indicators of the absolute and the relative natures of the human mind, the central role they play is the creation of a new economic structure in the social life of man by way of setting up of firms, industries, businesses, etc. The sustained economic life of man leads him to think of his eternal nature. Therefore, the individual's finding fulfilment in the relative plane leads him to seek eternal life. Maitreyi asked Yājñavalkya for eternal life (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.3): 'Yenāhaṁ na-amṛta syāṁ kima-haṁ tena kuryāṁ, What shall I do with all this if they don't lead me to the highest?'

So, finally, every other fulfilment leads us to seek the Eternal alone, which is the supreme human value. □

When We Have Problems in Meditation...

Says Master Yen to his disciples: 'My dear brothers, it is no use to feel sleepy while sitting for a long time on your meditation seat. If you are sleepy, you should leave the seat, walk about, and wash your face and mouth and freshen your eyes with cold water. Then return to your seat, sit with spine erect, freshening your mind as if you were standing on the edge of a ten-thousand-foot precipice, and concentrate on taking up your *hua tua* (the essence of a sentence, like a koan question).' [The devotees use mantras.]

—from Chang Chen-Chi, *The Practice of Zen*

How to Make Philosophy Popular?

PROF ASHOK VOHRA

In our series, 'Popularizing Philosophy', we have Prof Ashok Vohra, Department of Philosophy, Delhi University, presenting his views.

The declining number of students who enrol for studies in the departments of philosophy and comparative religion in particular and the humanities stream in general in the universities, should, in fact, not be a cause for concern for anybody who has been part of the university system for a considerable time. I cannot think of a time when philosophy could be regarded as a 'popular' subject in which students enrolled *en masse*.

The reason for this, obviously, is that philosophy does not teach one the art of earning a living. In the contemporary times, with its emphasis on globalization—both at the levels of production as well as consumption—and increasing materialism, it is but natural that the students' first preference would be for subjects which at least promise, even though they may finally fail to deliver, the goodies which are the recognized parameters of 'the good life.' This is not a new or post-liberalization/globalization phenomenon in India. Indians have always prayed: '*adīnasyām śaradaḥ śatam*, let us become affluent and live for a hundred years.' It would be wrong to assume that the Indian society has traditionally preferred a life of penury in contrast to material affluence. Indians, as can be gauged from the classical literature like the *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, etc, have been great connoisseurs of good things in life—silks, good food, unbridled power, women. That is why traditionally too, in India as everywhere else, the study of philosophy is not the first choice of students, nor have the philosophers ever occupied a central or pivotal place in the Indian society.

Nor can this decline in the number of students be seen as an exemplar of the traditional rivalry between science and humanities. In fact, science and philosophy complement each other, for the aim of both is to dispel ignorance and illuminate the human mind. The works of Albert Einstein, Arthur Eddington, Werner Heisenberg, Julian Huxley, Erwin Schrodinger and others support this contention. Philosophy needs scientific foundations to give a deeper and correct explanation of the problems confronted by it. On the other hand, science needs philosophy to relate and evaluate the technological products and scientific theories with cultures and values as well as the aspirations and goals of people. The 'smart' generation of today, at least in India, is quite aware of this fact. So when they make a conscious choice in favour of studying the hi-tech courses at the formal level in the universities and colleges, their intention in making this choice is to make themselves materially self-sufficient.

The other reason for the declining number of students who opt for studying philosophy at the college level is that a large number of students who pass out from schools do not even know that a subject called philosophy exists. They have not heard of this subject because they do not have a subject by that name in their schools. (It is only very recently that philosophy as a subject has been offered at the Class X - XII level by the Central Board of Secondary Education. Four or five schools, and very few students—not more than 40 or 50—opt for this course from all over the country.)

Even those who venture to find out what would be taught to them under the head 'philosophy' find the syllabus content too hackneyed, abstract and abstruse to attract them to it. In order to make philosophy popular, we have to introduce it in schools right from the VI standard onwards. In the West, particularly in the US and Australia, there is a move to develop philosophy for children. The best of the philosophers in these countries are writing stories for children and prompting them to answer philosophical questions based on them. From all accounts, this programme is quite successful, and more and more children are participating in them. But we in India, who have a readily available treasure of philosophical stories in our traditional literature, have not even cared to look at them. **In fact, we do not teach them to our young students at the primary and middle standards. We teach, instead, stories like *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, etc. We do not teach them stories from the *Hitopadeśa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Pañcatantra*, etc.** As a result, these young and impressionable students are ignorant of the vast philosophical literature, narrating deep philosophical insights in the most simple and

lucid way. **To make philosophy popular among the younger generation, we need to introduce courses like Techniques of Reasoning (Logic); Reflections on Moral Life and Values (Ethics); Ideals of Good Society and Politics (Social and Political Philosophy); Self-knowledge and Personal Identity (*ātma-bodha* or Philosophy of the Mind), etc, at the secondary school level.**

Be that as it may, even those students who consciously choose to study philosophy for the love of it are quite surprised by the archaic syllabus that is taught in the departments of philosophy, both at the graduate and postgraduate levels. In some universities, Delhi University for example, the syllabus at the postgraduate level has not been changed for the last 20 years. Consequently, they too lose interest in its study. The first step that needs to be taken with conviction and sincerity, to make philosophy a subject—popular among university and college students—is to update the syllabus every five years and make it more and more applied to our contemporary and lived life. □

Some Hard Facts of Spiritual Life

The harder the blows come and the harder and dryer your road will become, the quicker and steadier you will rise, and the freer you will become, and in the end your success will be most glorious, without stain or obstruction of any kind throughout the whole of your journey. The more you will give, the more you will get. (This does not apply to giving money, but in doing work of all kinds for work's sake.) The more you will not want, the more will be given to you. Always remember the secret of the spiritual law that as soon as a person creates a taste and thereby a desire of any kind for the thing given, he will immediately lose it. Don't expect anything, for just as soon as this expectation comes, it certainly will bring with it trouble and misery. So, I say to you, don't expect, and then you will not have to be disappointed and your progress will be smooth and successful. Your past struggles for realization will be washed off in the great flood of mental distress of the mind, so don't taste, don't desire.

Learn how to sincerely and effectively thank God in case of subtle trials and most important trials sent by God to you. All day and night constantly (except the hours of sleep) go on repeating your mantra.

—from *Swami Trigunatita: His Life and Work*

A Pilgrimage to the New World

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj is General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Revered Maharaj has been visiting different places on invitation to deliver lectures and promote the cause of Vedanta. He recently visited some of the Ramakrishna Order's centres in Europe and America. Upon repeated requests, he penned down his feelings and experiences of the tour. We hope our readers will greatly benefit from these beautiful memoirs. This is the second in the series.

SAN FRANCISCO - 1

From Tokyo, I flew to Los Angeles. The flight was on time. It takes ten flying hours to reach Los Angeles, situated on the West Coast. Having left Tokyo at 6.45 pm on 12 April by Singapore Airlines, I reached Los Angeles at 12.15 pm on the same date. Crossing the date line, we travel back in time!

Though the plane landed at 12.15 pm, we could come out of it only after an hour, for there was no vacant parking bay for the aircraft. Incidentally, both in my flights from Singapore to Japan and thence to Los Angeles, I couldn't get any vegetarian food, though the airline had already been informed, perhaps due to some communication gap. And at Los Angeles, Swami Sarvadevananda and others had brought some food and left it in their car; but, alas, it couldn't find any parking space! So the moment I entered the USA, the 'parking space' problem came prominently to my notice. With similar 'parking space' episodes many times during my tour, I had to conclude that the number one problem in the USA is the parking problem.

San Francisco is a city of ups and downs. Its climate is salubrious throughout the year. Surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the Bay on its three sides, along with a strong breeze blowing most of the time, the city never gets too hot or too cold. Beautifully built, with straight roads criss-crossing, it is the city of stately mansions. The 'downtown' in the cities of the Occident is a cluster of high-rise build-

ings which forms the commercial heart of the city. The residential areas are spread out on all the sides. Well laid out roads, with trees on either side and broad sidewalks make vehicular and pedestrian movement easy. But since vehicles are too many, the peak hour rush slows down the city traffic.

Founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1900 during his second visit to the USA, the Vedanta Society of Northern California has grown steadily through the years. It has three buildings: The one on Webster Street, built by Swami Trigunatitananda (one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna), is known as the Hindu Temple or the 'old temple'. Now most of the work is carried on at the 'new temple' on Vallejo (pronounced Valleho) Street. It has



The Hindu Temple, San Francisco



The Hindu Temple in Full Regalia

a beautiful chapel with bronze images of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Bhagavan Buddha, and Jesus Christ adorning the altar. Another building is the convent, some 200 yards away, on the opposite row. The nuns live here.

The San Francisco centre has been presided over by Swamis Turiyananda (another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna), Trigunatitananda, Prakashananda, and Ashokananda. Swami Prabuddhananda, the present head, is managing this centre since 1970. It has three retreats, the biggest of them being Olema in Marin County. Spread out in 2000 acres of forested hills, it is indeed a quiet place for contemplation. An establishment is maintained here. The retreat on the banks of Lake Tahoe—200 miles away, at a height of 6,500 ft—has 200 acres of land, filled with pine trees. This lake is quite big—more than 70 miles in circumference. Retreats are conducted here during the summer season. The Shanti Ashrama retreat is 140 acres of land, bordering the desert. Swami Turiyananda had lived here from time to time between 2 August 1900 and June 1902 with disciples and admirers. They used to live in log cabins. Water is scarce even now, making regular living difficult.

Vedanta work in San Francisco was difficult in the beginning, but now the Society is well-established, with a steady congregation. On 13 April, Swami Prabuddhananda took me around the city and also to the Golden Gate

Park, which Swami Vivekananda had visited in 1900. On 14 April, the day on which the Society was started 100 years ago, a public service was held there. Sister Gargi, the famous author of the six-volume work, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, read out a report of the Society. I spoke on 'Ideals and Activities of the Ramakrishna Order.'

SEATTLE

On 15 April I left for Seattle, north of San Francisco, almost on the Canada border. It is the most important city in the State of Washington. After an hour's flight I arrived there at 5 pm. Swami Bhaskarananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington, and some devotees were at the airport. At the Seattle airport, announcements are made both in English and Japanese. Even signboards are in these two languages. This is indeed surprising.

It is worth noting that even the airports of smaller cities in the USA are many times bigger than the airports in India. This shows that the people mostly travel by air. Trains are not popular with them. Shorter distances are covered by car. Freeways, sometimes going up to 10 lanes, criss-cross the country. They are the main arteries connecting all parts of this big nation.

In all airports the efficiency level is high.



Swami Trigunatitananda: The Pioneer of Vedanta Work in San Francisco and First Martyr to the Cause

Baggage arrives by the time you reach the baggage collection area. However, I would rate Singapore airport as the no. 1 airport in the world—for the speed, efficiency, cleanliness and aesthetic arrangement.

Seattle is a beautiful city with lakes and plenty of greenery. Having gone there in spring, it was a riot of colours everywhere, with rhododendrons of different hues, azaleas, magnolias and many other flowers in full bloom. Roads are lined with trees and have wide pavements with lawns.

Started in 1938, our Seattle centre is situated in a prestigious locality. With two buildings facing each other on either side of the road, the centre has enough space for its activities. Parking is the only problem.

Seattle is the home of two big companies—Microsoft and Boeing. A good number of Indians (some say, about 30%) are employed in the software industry.

On 16 April, I spoke at the centre on 'Vedanta and the Modern World' at 11 am. About 100 people were in the audience—Americans and Indians in equal number. Our devotees in Seattle are both Americans and Indians, in equal numbers. In most of our American centres the Sunday service is held at 11 am. This custom follows the Sunday church services in the country. Of course, it is practical in one sense. On Sundays some people wake up late and household chores are also to be done. So they can get ready only by 10.30 am.

Speaking of household chores, it must be remembered that in western countries—also in Australia and New Zealand—all household work like washing the car, laundering, vacuuming the floor, dishwashing, etc, are to be done by ourselves. No servant can be hired: the cost is prohibitive. Only very rich people can employ drivers. Either the husband or the wife drive the car, or they own separate cars. Chauffeur-driven cars are very rare. Any teenager above 16 can get a driving licence. Traffic rules are imposed strictly: any violation results in heavy fines. All these show that the way of



The Vivekananda Assembly Hall, Tapovan Retreat, Seattle (Photo: Swami Manishananda)

life in the West is much different from that of the East.

On 17 April morning, Swami Bhaskarananda took me to Tapovan, the retreat centre about 45 minutes away from the main centre. (That is how they describe distances in the USA. It's not in terms of miles or kilometres but in terms of the time taken by car to reach the place!) It has an area of 21 acres—a beautiful, quiet locality. Lawns, flower beds, a small stream, forest—all these make the place charming. The chapel too is very nice. The hall can accommodate about 100 devotees. There are separate buildings for women and men retreatants. Once a month, a retreat is held, in which devotees from Seattle, Vancouver and nearby places participate.

Next morning, I went with Swami Bhaskarananda to the Snoquomish Falls, about 60 miles away. It is quite a big falls. The Snoquomish (an American-Indian name) river descends with all force. On our return journey I went to have a look at the West Washington University. It has a very big campus and is considered a prestigious one. I saw some posh areas of downtown Seattle also.

On 19 April morning, Swami Bhaskarananda took me to Vancouver, BC, Canada. It is about 3 hours' drive from Seattle, but the customs formalities on the border can delay us to the tune of one hour or more.

We reached Vancouver around 12 noon.



The author at Canada Place: The building to the author's left with several arches in a row is the Canadian Pacific Railway Station, where Swami Vivekananda boarded the train on his way to Chicago in 1893

Here the devotees (mostly Indians) have bought a house for the local Vedanta Society. A small chapel, three rooms, a kitchen, etc make this 3-storeyed house. It is situated in a beautiful residential locality. We can't hold public meetings here. For that we shall have to hire a public auditorium.

Vancouver is a beautiful city with the sea all around and mountains in the vicinity. Snow was still there when I visited the place. There are a few skiing lots on the mountains. Springtime was already there, and so flowers—tulips of wonderful colours, rhododen-

drons, etc—were in bloom. In the morning Dr Bhatt took us to Queen Elizabeth Park. It is remarkably beautiful—full of flowers, an artificial waterfall, trees of various kinds, etc.

Next afternoon, Dr Bhatt took me to the wharf where Swami Vivekananda landed in 1893. He showed me the railroad station, from where Swami Vivek-

ananda must have boarded the train to Winnipeg, on the way to Chicago.

In the evening, a lecture had been arranged in a small public hall. I spoke to an audience of 47 people on Sri Ramakrishna. Next morning we left for Seattle with Swami Bhaskarananda, Allen Freedman driving. We could reach Seattle only by 1.15 pm (it took nearly four hours) due to the delay at the customs post.

(to be continued)

How to Have Spiritual Experiences?

'Look here, my child, it is He alone who can bring about any realization. Hold fast to Him. Weep and pray to Him; out of His grace He will grant you everything at the right moment. He is the master of our minds—He is the supreme Self that has come down as our Master. If He, out of His grace, but turns the mind even a little, then this very restless mind, mad as an elephant as it is, becomes calm and gets lost in *samadhi*—it gives up all attachment to worldly things once for all. How can one reach high spiritual states unless the mind becomes very fine? Again, can the mind rise to the supersensuous plane all of a sudden? It requires long spiritual practice. One can have the higher spiritual realization only when the mind becomes finer than the finest and attains a high level of consciousness. The spiritual moods become manifest through a mind that is purified. As the mind reaches higher levels of consciousness, spiritual realities of greater order become reflected in it. What is essential is to have faith in and devotion to His lotus feet; when that is there, everything is achieved,' says **Swami Shivananda (Mahapurush Maharaj)**.

The Power of Prayer

TIMOTHY WHITE

We publish selections with permission from a beautiful article titled 'Northwest Coast Medicine Teachings: An Interview with Johnny Moses.' These are taken from The Shaman's Drum (No. 50, 1998), founded and edited by the author, and published from P. O. Box 270, Williams, OR 97544, USA. In the Native American context, the word 'medicine' refers to healing of the body, mind and spirit. 'Medicine' is commonly used to mean spirituality and religion as a way of healing the spiritual self. The important point we concentrate on in this interview is Johnny Moses' stress on prayer and simple faith in the Creator. We thank Mr Timothy White for granting permission to use the article, and thanks to Mr Greg Fields, Dept of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University, USA, for arranging everything.

Johnny Moses is a master storyteller, traditional healer, and respected spiritual leader who carries the medicine teachings of his Northwest Coast ancestors. Born at Ohlat, a remote Nuu-chah-nulth village on the west coast of Vancouver island, British Columbia, Canada, Moses has a multitribal ancestry. At the age of 13, after being healed of cancer, Moses was called to carry on his family's medicine traditions and given his great-grandfather's name, *Whis.stem.men.knee* ('Walking Medicine Robe'). In addition to training under seven traditional medicine teachers and serving as an Indian Shaker minister, Moses acquired an academic education and graduated at 18 from the University of Victoria with a Bachelor's in Education. Fluent in eight Native languages as well as English, Moses shares the *Si.si.wiss* medicine teachings and healing ceremonies of his people through an organization known as the Red Cedar Circle (www.johnny-moses.com).

Timothy White: *In your work, you often talk about the teachings you received from your grandparents. Would you tell us about your grandparents and the ways they passed down those teachings?*

Johnny Moses: I was raised by my grandparents, Johnny and Mary Moses—those were their English names. In

our tradition, the grandparents actually adopt the oldest grandchild, and I was the oldest child in our family, so they raised me from the time I was three months old. Both of my grandparents were practising medicine people. I grew up travelling with my grandparents to ceremonies all across Vancouver Island and even on the mainland. As we travelled back and forth, my grandparents would stop to visit our many relatives. Because our relatives came from different tribes, I grew up speaking many Native languages. I spent much of my childhood listening to the elders share the songs and stories of our medicine ways.

My grandparents mostly taught us children the traditional stories, what we call the teachings. We heard many, many stories—while we were eating, while we were at home, while we were travelling in the car from one gathering to another. After we heard a story several times, they would have us tell the story to them. If we made mistakes telling the story, they wouldn't say which parts of the story were right or which were wrong. They would just tell the story again, and we had to find our mistakes by listening to the way they told it. ... As we got older, we found out we were doing more than just memorizing stories. We were learning about people, learning to listen to what people have to say to us, and

learning to feel people's sicknesses and to interpret those feelings. We learn so much from the stories—that's why we call them teachings.

As I got older, I was allowed to help my grandparents by singing for them while they were doctoring. I always enjoyed watching my grandparents do their healing work, because they had such different doctoring styles.

My grandmother was a rough doctoring woman. When she worked on people, it was like she was wrestling with them. Her hands-on healing was like strangling. She either healed people or scared the poison out of them, but they never came back. When people sat down on the chair for a healing, she would ask them, 'Do you believe in prayer?' If they said no, she would say, 'Then the hell with you.' But she would pray and sing for them anyway. She said it didn't matter if they didn't believe; what mattered was that she believed.

My grandfather was more gentle. He used to work with an eagle feather and with smoke. When he worked with a person, he would carefully brush them off and he would pray for them—laying his hands on them, singing and praying. After he was done, he would tell his patient, 'If this don't work, go home and take two aspirins.'

White: *Would you talk more about the medicine teachings and practices of the Northwest Coast peoples?*

Moses: It is important to understand that there are many medicine traditions and different ways of worshipping in the Northwest Coast. Many tribes live only ten or twenty miles apart, yet their traditions may be completely different. ... Of course, our Northwest peoples also have many beliefs and practices in common. We all believe in the Creator and that all things are living. We hold all things sacred and respect them. Our medicine teachings are very simple and close to the Earth. One of our teachings is that when you respect yourself and treat yourself as sacred, you will respect all things and know all things around you are sacred.

I personally follow the *Si.si.wiss* medicine. In our language, *Si.si.wiss* means sacred breath, or sacred life. *Si.si.wiss* medicine has only been shared in the outside world, outside of our villages, for the past twenty years. It's open to all people with pure hearts, but it's a traditional medicine of the Northwest Coast; it's not all mixed up. For me, following the *Si.si.wiss* medicine means following my family traditions and respecting the teachings of my grandparents.

White: *What are some of the practices and traditions of the Si.si.wiss medicine?*

Moses: There are many different kinds of medicine for people to practise in the *Si.si.wiss* tradition. Some people become hands-on healers, some heal with medicine plants, and others heal by singing, drumming, or dancing.

Singing and sound can change the way you think or how you feel. We use healing songs to strengthen people and help them discover the richness of their being. We have songs that can even heal a person who is suffering.

Singing and dancing are very important parts of the *Si.si.wiss* tradition. They are ways of worshipping and of healing ourselves. We use dancing and singing to regenerate ourselves before we start to work on other people.

Dancing is both a spiritual and a physical prayer. For instance, our stomp dance helps us get the life force flowing. When we stomp our feet in time with the drum, we are connecting our spiritual roots with Mother Earth's roots, her veins. At the same time that we're stomping our feet, our hands are dancing. They're reaching for medicine; they're reaching for healing and strength.

Another dance, the spin dance, helps us untie and regenerate ourselves. We get dizzy from spinning, but afterwards we see things differently.

When we're spirit power dancing, we're each dancing our own medicine, whatever that might be; a deer, a bear, a tree, or one of the elements, such as the wind. Even when the other people are completely different from us,

we don't try to change them. We try to be able to dance and sing with them. The Earth is the house of all living things, so all these powers are dancing and helping one another get back to the strong foundation of the Earth. That's what we're doing in the spirit power dancing.

White: *Would you talk about other healing practices that you use in Si.si.wiss healing ceremonies?*

Moses: One of the simplest healing techniques we use during our healing services is to work with candlelight, which represents fire. Fire is one of the great gifts that the Creator gave to the people, so they would come closer together and help each other. ... We use candlelight and firelight the same way many groups use sage and cedar smoke. We bless our drums, bells, and feathers with the light. Sometimes we wash our hands in the light. We put light on ourselves or others. While we're putting light on someone, we pray for help and blessings. We also ask the Creator to help us carry the light to help others.

Another simple healing technique that we use is to brush energy off our bodies. We also help each other by brushing off one another. We brush off the energy and gather it in our hands. Then we throw it upwards, clap our hands, and let the Creator take care of it. Clapping is a way of sealing our work.

White: *In your ceremonies, you encourage untrained people to do healing work on each other. How do they know what to do?*

Moses: In the way we work, people don't have to know. In our tradition, we just give ourselves to the healing spirit, and it's the spirit that does the work. We just pray and ask the Creator to use us to help the person who is sitting in the chair to be healed, and then we follow the spirit with our heart....

In our medicine way, we encourage people to first start working with the healing spirit of God, which is the love of God. We believe that everyone is born with the spirit of God and that this power is what keeps people alive. We also believe that no matter how much anger or poison people may have in their bod-

ies, God loves them so much that they're still living in the circle and they can be healed. That's why we hold all things sacred.

Once people learn to trust in the love of God and to communicate with the healing power that comes directly from the Creator, then they're usually ready to start working with an Earth power, such as an animal or plant power. Then they can see clearly that the love they carry is the same love the trees and the animals have inside them; their soul is the same.

White: *There appear to be certain parallels between Si.si.wiss and Christian beliefs such as your emphasis on the love of God. Were these beliefs always part of your tradition, or did your people incorporate Christian teachings into their ways?*

Moses: We have a lot of stories in the Northwest that predicted the Christians' arrival long before they got there. One of the prophecies among the Northwest peoples was that a new medicine that used bells would come to us. So, when the early missionaries brought bells, our people adopted the bell as a way of showing respect for the new medicine.

In the beginning, Indian people accepted Christianity because it was similar to our old ways. The Christians did a few things—such as praying to Jesus—that were new to the Indians, but our people already believed in most of what the Christians taught. When the new ways first came to our region, they were welcomed.

People didn't question the new ways until Christians started breaking their own rules. Then the Indians began asking, 'How come they're telling us to follow the Ten Commandments and they've broken every one of them?'

Of course, as time went on, the missionaries began to call our traditional ways 'devil worshipping.' Eventually, the churches and government outlawed our traditional medicines and forbade us to practise our ceremonies; it used to be against the law just to drum and sing or to share any of our ways. When

this happened, some people lost their medicines, but most people just became more secretive.

In the Northwest area, we were fortunate to have lots of forest land where our people could hide and carry on the ceremonies. Our traditional medicine survived by going underground—or into the woods.

White: *When people were adopting the new medicine, were there splits between the old and new ways?*

Moses: Our elders used to say, 'Never fight over religion. God gave those religions to the different people for a reason, and it's not up to us to fight over them.' Our people have always been open to new ways. It was only when the government agents and the missionaries started forcing the people into the new religion that problems and factions arose.

Initially, there were some conflicts between people who had become Christians and those who still practised the ancient longhouse way. Later, there was some tension between the longhouse way and the Indian Shaker way. Many people practised both ways, but some groups said people shouldn't practise both at the same time.

Even today, there are a few individuals who are stuck in their separate ways, but our people are starting to come together again because they realize that what's really important to help our young people. Most of our elders today are thankful when young people join anything—whether it's Christianity or medicine ways—as long as it keeps the youth away from drugs and alcohol.

That's one of the reasons why the medicine circles I run are always open. Everybody is invited to come and pray with us. Even if people belong to completely different traditions, they can still come together, because we're all human beings. We have the same spirit and we pray to the same God. That's the way I believe....

Once, when I was working in Alberta, some Indians asked me, 'Aren't you afraid that the non-Indians will take your power away

from you?' My response was that, in the first place, I don't own this power; it's a gift from God and from Mother Earth. In the second place, my power is love—if people need more love in their lives or in their hearts, they are welcome to take my power, because God would just replace it.

It's ignorant to think that anyone is going to be able to take away someone's power. That's only temporary and it doesn't last very long. Animal people don't steal power from each other. Animals don't worry if anyone's going to steal the bear's power or the tree's power....

We have a home that we call the Mother House, on the Swinomish Reservation. The Mother House is an old medicine house that belonged to my grandaunt Addie Williams. People used to go there to hide and practice the medicine ceremonies, and we still use it today—it's our spiritual centre.

White: *Are there other teachings or messages you want to share with our readers?*

Moses: There are so many messages, and wherever I travel I always try to share the same ones.

First of all, it is very important to honour your elders. I encourage everyone to ask their elders about everything in life, because our lives are so short on this Earth. Some people wait until all their old people are gone, and then they wish they had listened.

I always say that if you don't have a tradition, adopt one. If you don't have any elders, adopt an elder. There must be some way for you to connect to the Earth, to learn the ways of nature. One purpose of these medicine ways is to encourage people to communicate with the Earth, to love the Earth, and to give back to the Earth....

Our elders say all our teachings come from the ancestors. ... They say that even if all the teachers died out—if we lost everything—the Earth would still teach whomsoever was left, but we would have to start all over again, just like the first people. I think that's why some of our elders are teaching

outsiders. Even if some of their own children won't listen to them, they know that some day their grandchildren or great-grandchildren will decide to go back to the way, and then it will be waiting for them....

I also like to remind people to be thankful. In our medicine way, we try to be thankful for the simplest things in our lives, such as air to breathe and water to drink.

I encourage people to ask the Creator to take care of their problems while the problems are still small. People today forget that the simplest way to heal illness is to take care of these sicknesses when they are very, very small. If you let the smallest doubt or anger stay in your body, those dead seeds will just accumulate more dead things around them.

One of the reasons our elderly people were very strong was that they didn't keep poison in their bodies. If they saw someone acting in a terrible way, they just prayed for

that person. If something was bothering them, they prayed and left those troubles on the altar. They didn't want to take that sort of energy back to their people.

I also encourage people to listen to their spirit and to start encouraging themselves. My grandparents used to say, 'Start encouraging yourself early in the morning, as soon as you get up. Don't wait for someone to encourage you, because you might have to wait for a long time before someone else will encourage you. It's never too early, or too late, to help yourself.'

One last teaching from our elders is that there are some that listen and there are some that hear. There's a lot of meaning in that teaching—that's why we're always praying for spiritual sight and spiritual hearing, and for the ability to speak in a spiritual way. □

The New Style of Management

In spite of the numerous management techniques being taught nowadays, there's not much success in organizations owing to lack of employer-employee coordination. It is not the master-servant attitude that succeeds, but the holy relationship of love. 'I'm the boss, you are my servant' attitude will boomerang.

What Swami Shivananda says about the Ramakrishna Order is true for others too. He says: 'The love, affection, and respect which the members of the Order feel for one another constitute the life-force of this organization. The spiritual power and unity of the organization will remain intact so long as this love for each other will remain untarnished, for this relationship of love centres round the Master.' Swami Prabhavananda reminisces about a Trustees' Meeting he witnessed: 'I remember a board meeting of the Ramakrishna Order's trustees early in the year of 1915. Swami Saradananda, the Secretary, arrived from the Udbodhan Office and asked: "Where is brother Baburam [Swami Premananda]?" "He is upstairs in the shrine room," I informed him. Swami Saradananda tiptoed upstairs. I followed him. In a corner of the room Swami Premananda was seated, absorbed in meditation. Swami Saradananda was a big, strong man. He lifted the slight, motionless figure of his brother-disciple and carried him downstairs, dropping him in the courtyard. Swami Premananda landed on his feet and began to dance in ecstasy. Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda], Swamis Turiyananda, Saradananda, Shivananda, and Subodhananda, all joined him. Maharaj danced in the centre and his brother-disciples circled around him. The whole place vibrated with their spiritual fervour. They danced and sang for about an hour. It seemed as if they were calling mankind to come to be liberated and to share in the bliss of God.'

RELIGION AND LIFE

Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The questions and answers being serialized in these columns are not meant to be scholarly expositions of various issues. People from different walks of life used to meet Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj daily during his tenure as President of the Ramakrishna Order, and discuss with him their problems and doubts; and Revered Maharaj would clear their doubts in a characteristically simple way. These questions and answers were recorded and read out to him before he approved them all for publication.

Maharaj, what is the difference between *prārabdha* and *karmaphala*?

Prārabdha, 'that which has begun to bear fruit', is also a form of *karmaphala*, 'fruit of action'. Whatever actions you had performed in past lives, and have begun to produce fruit now, are called *prārabdha*. What you are experiencing now and what you will be experiencing in the future are also, in a broad sense, *karmaphala*.

What is a *tanmātra*?

The subtle form of a thing is called *tanmātra*. It is unmixed and unalloyed. The physical universe has been formed by the permutation and combination of the five elements—earth, fire, water, air, and space. These five fundamental elements are called *tanmātras*.

What is the meaning of *bhavaroga*?

Bhavaroga is the 'disease of the world'—the disease of worldliness. *Bhava* is the world and *roga* is disease. We are burning in this world, yet we want worldly attractions. If we had considered our living here merely as duty, and that we are only performing our duties, the world wouldn't have scalded us much. In the *Durgā Saptasatī*, there is a statement from the businessman, Samadhi (1.32):

*Kimetan-nābhijānāmi
jānannapi mahāmate;
Yat prema-pravaṇam cittam
viguneśvapi bandhusu.*

I do not understand why, but even though my wife and children are so averse to me, my mind is terribly drawn towards them.

This is the fate of most people: their son tortures them, but still, 'After all he is our son!' It should have been a sense of duty instead of attachment; had there been a sense of duty alone, things would have been benevolent. This is called *māyā*, this is slavery to the senses!

We are bound hand and foot to the world. We do not aspire after liberation from bondage. And even if God Himself comes to give us liberation, we become terrified. An old lady was carrying a heavy load on her head. She could not carry it for long. So she cried with all her heart to the Lord of Death, Yama: 'O Lord of Death! I cannot bear this suffering anymore. Please take me away!' Hearing her heartfelt wail, Yama appeared before her. Instantly, the old lady said: 'Father, since you have come to me, anyway, please carry this load for me.'

Maharaj, what is *bhāva*?

Bhāva means 'being' or 'existence'. Its antonym is *abhāva* or non-being.

There is a Bengali saying: '*Bhāva-rājye [bhāver ghare] curi.*' What does that mean?

The meaning is, you think in one way and express it outside in an altogether different way. This is 'theft in the world of being or *bhāva*.'

Are recollection (*smṛti*) and subcon-

conscious mind one and the same? Is the subconscious mind knowable?

No, the two are not one and the same thing. There are differences. There is no way of knowing the subconscious mind. But only when thoughts float on the surface in dreams or dream state, something of it can be known. The conscious, the subconscious or the unconscious are different strata of the mind. Certain hidden ideas come to the surface by inducement or with the help of some stimulant. It is something like this: we had forgotten something of our childhood; and it comes to mind due to some stimulant that has a relation with that incident.

I want to know about the other smṛti, the scripture called smṛti. Do all societies have smṛtis? And are smṛtis subject to change?

None can survive without the codes of conduct, systematically stated in scriptures called *smṛtis*. All societies have such codes in one form or another. Show me one society where religious codes or practices are not there! These codes undergo changes—they change with the times.

Are smṛtis compulsorily practised only in Hinduism?

No, not that. Only the beasts of the jungle may have no society and, hence, rules—and that too in the ordinary sense. Beasts too have a society of their own: as for example, when they live in a herd, they have the herd instinct. But they do not have the critical bent of mind as human beings do. That apart, why Hindus alone, all have a society and codes.

What is 'dry reasoning'?

The reasoning of the logician or *tārkika* is called 'dry reasoning'. Such reasoning has no feeling or devotion.

There are some who for various reasons could not embrace monastic life. They cannot follow the rules of householders either. That is, they cannot be householders too. What

will become of such people?

They will have no obligatory actions! And we can live the householder's life too and progress spiritually.

They say that the elephant walks by, caring little for the dogs that bark. What does this mean?

Upekṣā! Ignore your detractors. Suppose someone harms us, we should not think of harming him in retaliation. This is ignoring the wicked.

What is the difference between the terms 'Brahman' and 'Paramēśvara'?

By 'Brahman' the Absolute is meant. That which pervades everything, and is everything, is Brahman. Paramēśvara or Īśvara is the controller of the universe (*niyantā*). He is Brahman enveloped with *sāttvic* ignorance.

What is ajapā-japa? Can it be practised by us?

Ajapā means practising japa with each breath—synchronizing the repetition of the name of God with one's respiration. That is, '*śvāsa-praśvāsayoḥ bahir-gamana-āgamanābhyām akṣara-niṣpāda-rūpo japah*,' This has a particular rhythm, and unless the rhythm is properly maintained, normal respiration will be affected, thereby causing ailments.

When a knower of Brahman is not in the state of samadhi, does he have the perception of the world?

His actions and behaviour are superimposed on him by us. When we say the world is nothing but Brahman, we mean that He has become everything: the sand and the sesame seed. Sand is Brahman, and sesame seed is Brahman. So both sand and sesame seed are one and the same! All this is our argument. If we need oil, we do not grind sand, we grind sesame seeds. The knower of Brahman, needs neither sand nor sesame seed.

—compiled by Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar

Meditations on Madhu Vidyā

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

We are serializing these meditations, based on Swami Shraddhanandaji Maharaj's talks on Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (Chapter 2), compiled by Archana (Mary Anna Tamaz).

THE SECOND MANTRA

इमा आपः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, आसामपां
सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमास्वप्सु तेजो-
मयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमाध्यात्म रैतस-
स्तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स
योऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम्
॥२.५.२॥

This water is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this water. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this water, and the intelligent immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; he is indeed the Self in all. He is all.

This section is called *madhu-vidyā*, the meditation on honey, found in the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (2.5). Honey means sweetness, joy. So we have to collect honey from the different parts of this universe. That is the contemplation. We began the first meditation (2.5.1) with the Earth (*prthvi*). [Last month, it was wrongly mentioned as 5.2.1. We regret the error. —Editor] Now we come to water; then we shall take up air, then space, then lightning, then fire.

These are the different segments of this universe, which are related to all living beings. That segment which is not related to living beings, including man, is not taken into consideration in these meditations. So first comes water. In meditating on water, all beings are considered. That is the first part of this meditation. We have to think of water in a cosmic way, not in a little or superficial way.

The first part of this mantra is about the

particular segment of this universe—in this case water as well as all beings. We understand what all beings are. But for the moment, let us restrict ourselves to human beings. So we shall have to think of water and human beings. Suppose I need water. I collect water from my tap or well. But that won't do in this case! This contemplation has to be cosmic. To think of water means that you have to think of all the waters, and so the mind has to be expanded. Expand the mind. Think of all the rivers and all human beings. Think of our Sacramento itself: think of the two rivers here, the American River and the Sacramento River. And think of all the people who are living around these two rivers. But the mind doesn't want to expand. It wants to be satisfied with what's most urgent and immediately necessary, like this body, house, office, food, children, recreation, etc. It is satisfied with the church one day, a little *Gītā*-reading the other. But you have to expand.

The mind asks, 'Why do you want me to expand?' Because you want the greatest and the highest. That highest is Brahman. And to eventually find that the highest, or the greatest, is your own Soul, your Ātman. So this is the goal. For achieving this goal, it is necessary to contemplate on the whole. This goal cannot be achieved by mere reading. The mind has to expand—it has to be slowly purified. Then, after many years, we can reach that state of realizing the Soul. Sri Ramakrishna said the pure mind and the Ātman are the same.

So this is a kind of purification of the mind. Purification does not mean applying soap. It means that the mind has to expand. It

is at present full of limited and wrong ideas, limited and wrong notions. These wrong notions have to be washed away slowly from the mind. These contemplations are called *vidyās* in the Upaniṣads, and they are means to this purification.

So when we think of water, the mind has to think of all the rivers, all the oceans. This is the imaginative power of the mind, and the creative imagination is exercised in this contemplation. It is not difficult to imagine all the rivers, all the oceans, and all beings. Here, we can also think of the aquatic animals—fish, whales, sharks, etc. For the time being let our mind be like a television screen. And on that screen we are seeing all the waters and all the living beings.

Now bring them together. That is the point. The mind can do that, specially in dreams. In dream, we shall not be surprised if we find the River Mississippi flowing 200 feet away from the River Sacramento. In dream we can see such things, and we don't question that. In this contemplation, we have to do these impossible things. Let the mind go to China and see its great rivers. Let the mind go to Russia and imagine the Volga; to England and see the Thames. In this way, think of all the rivers in Asia, Europe, America. It's as if all the rivers are coming into your heart. However, they need not come into the heart even; they can be outside. But you can imagine the rivers. What a grand idea it is! This is the contemplation taught in this mantra. Think of all the rivers and all the oceans. We needn't be afraid, because we are in meditation. We are not actually going to the Arctic Ocean, for instance. In our contemplation, we have to welcome all these waters. But at the same time we have to think of all living beings, and the relation between the two.

Oh, these rivers are there, bringing life and peace and joy to us. Without the rivers, our life would have been barren. Rivers are so important in our lives. These waters are serving a great purpose. They are giving life and energy to all the beings, both inside the waters

or outside, on the shore. That is called *madhu*. *Madhu* means usefulness—that sweet relationship between living beings and the reality which is in the waters. The relation is called *madhu*. *Madhu* means joy, sweetness, harmony. That, then, is the relation.

The first part of the meditation is physical, but we are thinking in a greater way, a cosmic way. The second part of the meditation is to think of this vast mass of water. Not merely as a physical principle, but in the depths of the waters there is conscious spirit—a soul. The soul is, as the Upaniṣads say, '*tejo-mayo amṛta-mayah*, shining, effulgent, and immortal.' That immortal Principle is in the depths of the waters as we said with regard to this earth (in the first meditation). The physical earth has a soul. So here also the water has a soul.

And now we come to the individual, the seeker. In the first stage, we contemplated on all the waters and all beings. In the second stage you think of the depth of your being. What is the depth of your being? Beyond your body and mind, in the depth of your being, there is the Soul. So think of the Soul of water and think of your own Soul. Between the cosmic soul and the individual soul, there is a relation. What kind of a relation? The same relation—the relation of honey! The individual Soul is bound up with the cosmic water-Soul in a relationship of joy, sweetness, harmony, peace.

So the second meditation is to apply the philosophical ideas of the macrocosm and the microcosm. In the macrocosm, you are thinking of the cosmic Soul of the water. And in the microcosm, the little individual, you have also a water principle. Everyone knows that in our body is the microcosm, and the philosophical or metaphysical idea is that this microcosm is an indivisible part of the larger macrocosm. All that is in the macrocosm—in the vast outer universe—is in the microcosm.

Thus in this body and mind of mine there is also the earth, water, space, lightning, air. In this second meditation I contemplate on the

mutual relationship between the cosmic soul of the waters and my water soul. What is water soul? My soul changes, when looked at from different angles. I have an earth soul. That means when I think of my gross body and identify myself with this gross, solid part of my personality, then I am earth. And I can call it my earth soul. In the same way, there is a counterpart of the waters in my body, the watery elements. Again, everybody knows that rivers are flowing inside the body as the bloodstream. In the books of human physiology you read about how much water there is in our bodies by weight. That's the idea here. The water in the human body is not merely water, but it is standing on a conscious principle. Just as the gross body has a spiritual centre, so the water soul, *retasa puruṣa*. When we think of water in the body, we have to think of that conscious principle in the watery part. So the central idea is that we've to think that the soul of the waters of the world and the soul of the watery part of our body are bound up by the relation of *madhu*, sweetness. And then he says, *idam amṛtam*. This truth that the soul of the cosmic segment and the soul of the individual segment are one, is *madhu*.

Brahman is the soul of each. The individual and the cosmic—everything is Brahman, the spiritual Reality which unifies things. We can't always think of this fundamental unity of things at the very outset. So we have to go part by part—like an exercise. Think of the earth and think of your unity with the earth.

Think of all the waters and all living beings and then think of the spiritual Reality within both. You can forget this water body because in this translation they have ignored that. The reason is, if I say 'water body,' you think, 'What's water body?' For contemplation, if you can separate the whole into parts, there is richness in your contemplation.

The point is, this body is an organization. There are nails, bones, hands, fingers, hair, etc, and each is important. You cannot ignore anything. When you pare your nails and throw them, throw them with a blessing: 'Oh nails, you did so much to me. You mean so much for me. But now, you have overgrown. You are too long. That is why I am taking leave of a part of you.' In this way, we should see that each part of this body is important. Each is related with that thread of unity.

Now if you can meditate on these, you can experience the joy. There's a unity running through everything—from the tip of the toe to the head. You can see the thread of unity. If you think in this way, the mind expands.

Think of this body as a unity and different parts of the body as different manifestations of that unity, the Upaniṣads say. That unity is the Soul. It is the Soul that gives unity to the different aspects of the personality. So when we think of water, let's think of water as the physical part of the Soul.

We shall discuss fire in the third meditation next month. □

Why Should we Meditate?

'The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation (Dhyana). In meditation we divest ourselves of all material conditions and feel our divine nature. We do not depend upon any external help in meditation. The touch of the soul can paint the brightest colour even in the dingiest places; it can cast a fragrance over the vilest thing; it can make the wicked divine—and all enmity, all selfishness is effaced. The less the thought of the body, the better. For it is the body that drags us down. It is attachment, identification, which makes us miserable. That is the secret: To think that I am the spirit and not the body, and that the whole of this universe with all its relations, with all its good and all its evil, is but as a series of paintings—scenes on a canvas—of which I am the witness,' says **Swami Vivekananda**.

Living Bodhisattva

We publish a free translation of some portions from a very interesting article, published in our now defunct Hindi journal Samanvaya (Vol. 6, No. 7, 1927). The incident is an eye-opener—it stands out well against the dark social evil of family breakup.

This happened in Gofu, Japan, in 1921. One day, Kiyoko took her husband, who was complaining of severe backache, to a doctor. Having examined the patient, the doctor told her: 'I am sorry, but it's certain that your husband is having a terrible disease, and that's leprosy. This can never be cured by medicines. He'll suffer all his life. It would be better for him if you can take him over to the Naruko hot spring at Miyagi Prefecture.' Kiyoko was dumbfounded. Slowly she understood everything. Without informing her husband about the disease, Kiyoko told her father-in-law about it. Hearing her, the old farmer said: 'Kiyoko-san, I am so very sorry that you'll have to serve my leper son. But I shall be extremely grateful if you can take him to the hot spring as the doctor has advised.'

Towards the end of May 1921, Kiyoko began her journey with her husband to the hot spring, and reached it after some days. In order to save money, she hired the hut of an old farmer in a village nearby. For several months thereafter, Kiyoko would take her husband every day to the hot spring. But in spite of her efforts, she couldn't control the spread of leprosy, and within months, her husband's body began to show its signs. The villagers were scared of the disease, and so they threw Kiyoko's belongings out of her hut one day.

Kiyoko decided to take her husband home, which was at far-away Gofu. She bought two train tickets. As soon as the husband and wife sat in the train, a young man noticed leprosy and informed the other passengers. Soon the information spread like wildfire all over the coach. They wanted to throw the couple out, but the train had already started running. The passengers forced them

out of the train at the next station. Kiyoko went to the stationmaster and pleaded with him to allow them to go home by train. The stationmaster flatly refused. He said that according to the railway rules, people suffering from terrible diseases can't travel by train.

Kiyoko requested him again: 'Our house is 700 km away. How we can walk all the way home? Please be kind to us. If it's not possible for us to travel by passenger trains, we shall go by goods train at least...' The stationmaster told her: 'Instead of worrying about your own self, think of the others!' Though he may have been right, he made Kiyoko sad. She reflected: 'Yes, I should think of others ... All right. I shall myself take my husband home.'

This heroic lady then went to the market and purchased an old cycle-rickshaw. She also bought a few blankets. Seating her husband in the rickshaw and covering him with the blankets, she began cycling over the terrible terrain. Severe cold, unknown areas, and numerous other limitations on the one hand, no help from anyone on the other; we can easily imagine the hardship of such a journey of 700 km. Added to all the difficulties, no one—motels, houses, inns—was ready to take the couple in. Kiyoko managed to rest on the roadside or in some dilapidated buildings. But she was in great hurry: she would peddle with all the strength she could muster, because the weather was getting worse, and it could snow any day. And if it did, Kiyoko was certain that both she and her husband would be buried alive in snow. But despite her efforts she could travel not more than 10-15 km per day. Even before she could cross the Hikone mountains, it began to snow. It is not possible to tell about all that Kiyoko endured on her way. Suffice it

to say that they reached home, more dead than alive, by the end of January 1922.

When her father-in-law heard her tale and about the inhuman suffering she had endured, he wept bitterly. He instantly wrote a letter to Kiyoko's parents, seeking their pardon. Along with it, he had also added this: he had renounced all claim of his daughter-in-law, and she was free to return home. Kiyoko's parents lived a few villages away, and when they read the letter, they shed profuse tears. They didn't know what to do. They immediately sent Kiyoko's brother to bring her back. But Kiyoko didn't agree to renounce her husband. Her brother was adamant; he forcibly took her away.

Kiyoko stayed in her parents' house for three or four days, but couldn't stay for long. She saw an opportunity one day, and wrote a letter to her parents before leaving: 'I shall serve my husband. Our relationship was ordained by the Buddha and it would be a great sin on my part to leave my husband now. No one will take care of him now. So, please pardon me, dear parents! I return to my husband.' Reading her letter, her parents couldn't help weeping. What could they do but curse her karma? They must have tried to take her back, but in vain. Kiyoko was free to serve her husband now.

The disease of Kiyoko's husband began to spread everywhere. In a short time, it spread to his whole body and he began to smell bad. Due to his disease, the family became extremely poor. Neighbours began to get scared of his disease and said that he should be sent away to some leprosy centre. Even his own parents became afraid. It was only Kiyoko who served him as she would have done if he were a healthy individual. She would wash his clothes, which no one would dare touch, feed him, talk to him for hours at night when he couldn't sleep, clean him, etc. Unfortunately for her, she became lame in 1924 owing to overwork. But that didn't prevent her from continuing her service. Though she couldn't do what all she did earlier, she

nevertheless tried her utmost to serve her ailing husband. She would use her hands to walk quickly. But she never gave up her routine of taking her husband for an outing every evening, seating him on a cart. She would walk along with the help of a stick, pulling the cart herself.

Slowly people around recognized her devotion to her husband. Those who always wanted that her husband should be sent away were slowly talking highly of this lady. Though no one helped her, people began to respect her as a Bodhisattva.

When a gentleman, having heard about her, went to see her, a farmer told him: 'Oh, you have come to see the Bodhisattva, isn't it? Please wait. She'll come soon.' This gentleman asked who Bodhisattva was! The farmer said, 'It's the same lady whom you've come to see, sir. We revere her as Bodhisattva because we haven't seen another person like her.' Soon Kiyoko arrived. From what the gentleman had heard of her, he expected a sorrowful lady. But what he saw simply surprised him. There she stood, beaming with a heavenly smile, and greeting him with the utmost respect. Not one movement of hers showed any pain or sorrow or suffering. The gentleman said: 'I'm sorry that you couldn't lead a happy life because your husband is dangerously ill...' Kiyoko instantly said with a smile: 'Venerable sir, please excuse me. But I don't have any unhappiness at all. I am always happy.' The visitor wouldn't give up so easily. He said: 'Do you wish to say that this miserable life of yours is what you call a happy life?' She replied politely: 'I feel that my present state is itself one of great happiness. This is because, I consider it a great fortune to be able to serve my husband. He feels relief from pain on account of my little service...' When she laughed again, the visiting gentleman understood that there wasn't a trace of unhappiness about her. He then realized why people had begun calling her 'Bodhisattva'.

Kiyoko's husband passed away sometime later. □

The Revival of Bhakti Movement and Sri Krishna Chaitanya

PROF B. N. SIKDAR

Prof B.N. Sikdar is a prolific writer on religious topics and a specialist on Swami Vivekananda. His recently-published book, Studies in Vivekananda, is a collection of scholarly articles on Swamiji. In this article, Prof Sikdar gives a simple, introductory picture of Sri Chaitanya. Sri Chaitanya's birth anniversary will be celebrated on 9 March this year.

Since ancient times (eg, the pre-Aryan and the Aryan periods), northern India has been a crucible, fusing cultures and civilizations. A few centuries ago, the same kind of fusion took place. At that time—the 15th century—a powerful Semitic faith, originating in the sandy, pitiless desert of the Arabian peninsula, had entrenched itself in the soil of the Indian subcontinent. Crossing the Hindukush Range (western Himalayas) with the marauding hordes that first came to pillage and kill, and finally to conquer and reign, this aggressive religion, supported in rude and subtle ways by State power, would brook no competition to proclaim that 'There is no God but Allah,' and that 'Muhammad is His Prophet.' This land's ancient faith, which was by now reduced to a body of ritualistic practices, maintained a precarious existence under this terrific onslaught.

Led into many iconoclastic ideas, the fundamentalists attacked the alien society with full force. It was natural that the society so invaded should desperately try to face the invasion in as many ways as possible. Among such attempts, the right royal one was the bhakti movement.

Bhakti has a glorious history. It has been popular, since ancient times, amongst the lowly and the humble. Through many a folk-tale, *yatras* and other popular methods, it has continued to flow in diverse channels all over the holy land.

In its form, the bhakti movement teaches

the supreme ideal of God-realization, assuming various spiritual attitudes, total surrender of the will to Vishnu or any other deity, devotion to Him, repeating His names, meditating on His form and actions, and so on. From the socio-ethical angle, bhakti could be properly channelized as an effective answer to the onslaught of a militant faith. And for good reasons: the bhakti movement didn't require sacrificial fire and sacrifices; its ritualistic practices were simple; it doesn't have the touch of esoteric ideas; and it didn't need any imposing shrine at the individual level. A photograph or likeness of God in clay or wood or stone would suffice.

Since the advent of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, it turned out that a wooden or clay image of Krishna and Radha, or Sri Chaitanya himself, would be enough for worship in an unorthodox manner. An adherent of the bhakti creed of Chaitanya exhibits certain common features, chief of them being the chanting of the Lord's names and repeating 'Haribol, Haribol' or 'Say, "Hari"'. The other characteristic features are: (a) simple but clean clothing with a shaven crown and a tuft of hair, and (b) group dances with upraised arms, to the accompaniment of *khol*, *kartal*, etc. A devotee, according to Sri Chaitanya, has to lead an austere life though he or she may be affluent, take simple meals, cultivate humility, control passions, shun violence of every kind, encourage charity and loving kindness, and try to ensure social justice. The Vaishnava faith

of Sri Chaitanya is basically monotheistic. It advocates devotion to Krishna. The Vaishnavism propounded by Sri Chaitanya is also called Gaudiya Vaishnavism, after the place of Chaitanya's birth, and consequently, the birth of his movement. Navadwip is 120 km from Kolkata in Nadia District. It was here that Sri Chaitanya was born and spread the glory of the name of Sri Krishna.

There's a hymn to Sri Krishna, composed by Swami Vivekananda:

O Krishna, my friend,
let me go to the water,
Oh, let me go today.
Why play tricks with one
who is already thy slave?
O friend, let me go today, let me go.
I have to fill my pitcher
in the waters of the Jumna.
I pray with folded hands, friend,
let me go.

This is the highest expression of love for God. The highest type of devotion according to Vaishnavism is called *premabhakti*. It's said that Sri Radha and Sri Chaitanya were the greatest examples of this type of supreme devotion.

2

Many legends have grown around Sri Chaitanya's life. Romantic fiction tends to grow like creepers around an oak. It is there in the story of every figure in history, great or small. Moreover, in this case, legendary art found rich and ready material. Sri Chaitanya was tall, slim, well-proportioned in body, in which the muscles of his arms and legs were taut, the chin raised, face aglow, eyes shining.

In his childhood, Chaitanya was called Nimai ('one destined to die early'). He had a prankish disposition, his memory as sharp as a razor blade. Already Navadwip was a reputed centre of Sanskrit learning. Nimai had mastered almost all the branches of classical scholarship, especially logic (*nyaya*) and grammar by the time he was about 20 so that soon people started describing him as Nimai Pundit. To his school (*tol*) flocked scholars from far and near.

Customarily, a pundit was expected to travel places, challenging other pundits to meet him in learning-contests. Nimai too did so, and vanquished all who dared him. Such achievements when he was barely in his early 20s made him proud. He came to believe that the intellect was the soundest way to approach the ultimate Reality. Quite unexpectedly, there occurred a change in the direction and purpose of Nimai Pundit's life as he visited Gaya, where there is a fossilized footprint on a big piece of black rock. Hindus believe it is the impress left by Vishnu's foot, while the Buddhists think it is the Buddha's. As Nimai Pundit gazed at the impress, he passed into a trance. All his prudishness and haughtiness melted away. For a while he was in a peculiar state of mind. The reputed spiritual personality of the day, Ishwara Puri, persuaded Nimai Pundit to turn his mind to Sri Krishna. Nimai Pundit's real nature began to manifest, and the devotee in him showed himself. At 24 years, Keshava Bharati, a monk of high calibre, ordained him into sannyasa (in January 1510) and christened him Krishna Chaitanya. He also came to be called 'Mahaprabhu' by his admirers in later stages of his life.

The next six years saw the great master travelling to pilgrim centres all over eastern India. Of these places, Vrindaban stirred most the depths of his soul. Finally, the saint chose to settle at Puri, Orissa, a sacred town having the ancient temple dedicated to Lord Jagannatha. The truth about his passing is not clearly known. But though legend has thrown a veil over the disappearance of the saint, he must have passed away, as it is believed, in his late 30s, on account of severe penances, ceaseless exertion in discussing, singing kirtans, propagating the message, dancing, fasting, and total disregard of his body. The date attributed to his passing on is 14 June 1533.

3

A considerable amount of more or less contemporary literature is extant on the activities of Sri Chaitanya. For instance, *Chaitanya Bhagavata* by Brindavan Das, *Chaitanya Man-*

gala by Jagannatha Mishra, etc. However, surpassing all in skill and marshalling of facts is Krishnadas Kaviraj's *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, which covers the entire life story more methodically, dividing the deeds and events into three parts—early, middle, and last. A product of immense labour, and sublime bhakti, the volume is simply outstanding. The author completed the masterpiece in his old age.

Here are two excerpts from a translation by an eminent scholar (Jadunath Sarkar, *Chaitanya's Life and Teachings*):

The Master felt his separation from Krishna just as the milkmaids did after Krishna had left Vrindaban for Mathura. Gradually he began to break out in wild lamentation, even as Radha had talked in delirium on meeting with Uddhava.

Ever did the Master consider himself as Radha and felt (and acted) like her. No wonder, for such is the course of *divya unmadana* (spiritual ecstasy).

Therefore is faith the only means of gaining Krishna, and it is described in all shastras as *abhidheya*. As wealth gives pleasure and drives away sorrow of itself, so bhakti kindles love of Krishna, and when love is turned towards Krishna, man is freed from bondage to the world. The fruit of love is not riches, or, the cessation of rebirth; but its chief object is the enjoyment of the beatitude of living....

Both the quotations make it clear that the saint's desire was to recapture the feelings which Radha tasted and hungered for. Couched in concrete, homely phrases, the narration of Krishnadas Kaviraj's retains a dignity worthy of the noble theme.

4

In the early part of his short span on earth, Sri Chaitanya and his group of devotees submitted meekly to persecution, without any thought of countering it. Incessant kirtans was not very unjustly the cause of neighbours' annoyance. But under the rigid surveillance, there was absolutely no immorality: critics

couldn't find anything unethical in Sri Chaitanya's devotion. Actually the air around wherever kirtan was performed seemed electrified. The populace felt the uplifting influence so keenly that brawls and domestic conflicts dwindled not only in Navadvip but in every village and town the group toured. Piety, modesty, meekness, compassion, and other noble qualities received an unmistakable impetus. More than anything else, the manifestation of the various forms of bhakti reached their zenith under the influence of Sri Chaitanya.

This revival of bhakti stimulated changes, which led to a new cultural growth, reflected in poetry, music, art and literature, in building styles (eg, the terra cottages at Bishnupur in Bankura), and lifestyles. The manner of deportment, status, and values among the higher and lower sections of society—seen in the quality of ethics, dress and skill in crafts—is now a part of our heritage. The hope of salvation swelled the heart of the lowly, the rude and the illiterate. In remote villages, kirtans takes place even now, releasing a flood of fraternal emotions.

Sri Chaitanya's inspiration fertilized Sanskrit learning first at Vrindaban, then in eastern India. Original works and commentaries by the apostles, Rupa, Sanatana, and Jiva Goswamis, and Gopala Bhatta and Raghunatha, as also the less known versatile devotees, were read avidly, copied, rehearsed, imitated—a few successfully—in dialect or language of the region. And this happened in an age which certainly did not encourage seats of such learning.

The power of Sri Chaitanya's creed (called neo-Vaishnavism by historians) checked the proliferation of the dehumanizing practices of the tantrik forms of worship, flourishing in eastern India. Perhaps unknowingly, Sri Chaitanya did strike out a path through the bloody jungle of conflicting religions. □

Relevance of Vedānta and Hinduism in Modern Days

SWAMI AMARANANDA

Swami Amaranandaji Maharaj is the spiritual minister of Centre Vedantique, Geneva, Switzerland. He was invited to deliver an address at the Third Parliament of Religions, held at Cape Town, South Africa, on 2 December 1999. His theme was, 'Relevance of Vedānta and Hinduism in Modern Days.' We thank Swami Amaranandaji for sending us the script of the talk. We shall conclude this article next month.

Introduction

Hinduism has been called a republic of creeds. The unity in our diversity is beautifully expressed in a few lines of a hymn, which resounds in many Śiva temples at the beginning of the week:

त्रयी साङ्ख्यं योगः पशुपतिमतं वैष्णवमिति
प्रभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परमिदमदः पथ्यमिति च ।
रुचीनां वैचित्र्या-दृजुकुटिल-नानापथजुषां
नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥

The Vedic path, the path of Sāṃkhya and Pātañjala Yoga, the doctrines of the Pāśu-patas and Vaiṣṇavas—for each one of them there is a scripture. People estimate: 'This is good, that is benefic.' Due to the variance of their temperaments, people follow straight or meandering courses. Like the sea in which diverse streams lose their identity, You, O God, are the destination of mankind.

Hinduism is the greatest glory of India's culture. Poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote about India's culture:

It is your sky which became first aglow
with spiritual light;
It is your forest retreats where
the first Sāma music was heard;
In your forest dwellings were first
elaborated
the branches of knowledge
and the precepts of Dharma;
It is there again that so much poetry

and legends were composed.

O, my Motherland, you have captivated
the whole world.

The term 'Hindu' is the disfiguration of the word 'Sindhu', the great river of the Indo-Aryan territory (this river—Indus—is still called Sindhu in Indian languages). 'Hindu' has been in the Indian vocabulary since about 1200 years. We shall, however, use the term 'Hinduism' to denote our religion of even earlier epochs. The closest Sanskrit word for 'religion' in the distant past was *dharma*. Dharma was the prescribed, correct mode for individual and social life. It was perhaps when important movements with little allegiance to the Vedas came into being in India that the adherents to the Vedic path began using the qualification *sanātana* (eternal) for dharma. The amorphous nature of the early dharma dissipated gradually with the classification and transmission of the Vedic literature and the composition of lawgivers (contrary to popular belief, the original *Manu Smṛti*—the most important source of Hindu law—is of a great antiquity).

As a culture evolves with religion as its pivot, there is diversity and the inevitable dissension and confusion. The vitality of this ramified structure depends upon a successful synthesis from time to time. Fortunately, this happened to Hinduism. The first attempt was in the domain of Vedic literature through the composition of the *Brahma Sūtras*, and the sec-

ond one englobed the whole Sanātana Dharma through the *Bhagavadgītā*. In Buddha's time there were more than 60 sects in India. When Śaṅkara appeared, the Sanātana Dharma contained six different schools of philosophy and many sects in the peripheral region. Outside the pale of this Dharma, there were 18 branches of Buddhism, among which four groups were important combatants in the domain of philosophical debate. Besides them, the Jainas and the Cārvāka-Lokāyatas were religious groups which also counted.

Since the 13th century, when Buddhism collapsed in India due to the proximate cause of Muslim hostility, and when Jainism also became a shrunken entity in the Indian religious landscape, it has been Vedānta coupled with the discipline part of Pātañjala Yoga (as opposed to its dualistic vision part) that has been prevailing. The Tantras whose origin was in the Vedic times but whose noticeable evolution was 1000 years old by the 13th century, developed first as a helix with turns opposite to those of Vedānta; but, ultimately, the Tantras became a subsidiary ally of Vedānta, with the same goal achieved through other means. The Śaiva philosophies, the Bhakti *mārgas* (the path of devotion) and the paths derived from the mutation of the Buddhistic *yānas* gradually became coloured by *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion), ie, both the strands of Vedānta. **So Hinduism today is that religion of which the different aspects are held together by the overarching Vedānta. Or, to put it otherwise, the Hindu cults and their associated creeds are, in a way, Vedānta put in different bottles.**

Most people within Hinduism, or without, find it difficult to define Hinduism globally. The ramifications of this religion, in the course of at least six millennia, is bewildering. To some so-called progressive elements within its fold, and to many more outside, it is Brāhmaṇism, unrelated to the duties and problems of modern times, and lacking in vision about the future. To some others, however, it is a storehouse of high spirituality

which could produce even in the 20th century such spiritual celebrities as Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayi Ma and Sant Ramdas—who were all alive when the Second World War ended.

A Critical Evaluation

Let us first discuss briefly those aspects of Hinduism which are widely perceived to be its weak points: (a) casteism, (b) polytheism/idolatry, (c) excessive other-worldliness, (d) tying up with one homeland, and (e) absence of creedal clarity.

Casteism: Let us quote from the article of a scholarly brahmin, named T.R. Venkatarama Shastri (the article is entitled 'The Smṛtis: Their Outlook and Ideals'):

The caste system, which so largely dominates the regulations of the Smṛtis as to marriage and inheritance and also in the sphere of criminal law and social usages, **is connected with external life and social organization. It does not affect the growth of the inner spirit of man in any sphere.** If the exact texts of the Vedic lore are denied to the śūdra, nothing of substance has been denied to him. His growth in every department is unimpeded. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and all other valuable books conceived as man-made are open to study for all. Even the unchanted Vedas, verbally the same, may be listened to and understood by the uninitiated classes. The Veda is denied, but not its meaning. As the saying goes: *Sasvaro vedaḥ asvaro vedārthaḥ*, the Veda chanted is Veda, and the Veda without chant is the meaning of the Veda. The Purāṇas and the Itihāsas are not without stories of the non-Aryans being referred to and approached for a solution of problems relating to a conflict of dharma.... In the purely spiritual sides of life, for example, among the *bhakti*-dominated communities, the spiritual equality of all the devotees, irrespective of caste, was recognized.

Among the spiritual masters venerated by the Hindus, Nāmdev was a tailor, Sadnā a butcher, Kabīr a weaver, Ravidās a cobbler, Senā a barber, Nābhā a pariah, and Dādū a

cotton-ginning Muslim. Swami Adbhutananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was an illiterate domestic servant in his pre-monastic days.

Yet the caste system, in its crystallized form, became the symbol of privileges and oppression. Hence, in the 11th century, Rāmānuja violated caste rules; in the 12th century Basava, the founder of the Liṅgāyata movement, rose against it. In the following centuries, Rāmānanda, Caitanya and many others were taking steps not conforming to the caste custom. Two centuries ago Rammohan Roy in Bengal became vocal against it. Actually, each day the citadel of caste hierarchy is being undermined in modern India.

The orthodox among the Hindus may still try to uphold the caste system mentioned in *Ṛg Veda* and *Bhagavadgītā*. The *Gītā* says: *guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ*, ie the system of caste classification has been made according to the propensity of *guṇa* (the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—generate in us the propensity of equilibrium, excitation and inertia, respectively) and according to the aptitude for a profession. Well, the propensity of *guṇa* is an attribute of the individual. **The hereditary profession was the correct method in olden days, but when education has been democratized, when the printing-press is 500 years old, when information technology is sweeping over the world, the hereditary profession as a norm cannot and should not exist.** Swami Vivekananda addressed himself to the upper castes with the following message: 'Get blasted, disappear! Let the new India emerge.' The poet Atulprasad Sen continued:

There is only one nation which
is divided into a hundred parts,
On the plea of variances
in caste and lineage;
O Hindus, you will perish
unless you give it up.

The national government of India is well aware of the problem and has taken many steps to remove the visible signs of a long-drawn oppression. **But one should take cau-**

tion that the lower castes do not try to perpetuate their vested interest by trying to remain in the bracket 'scheduled' indefinitely, and that they do not take to the violent method or employ counter-repression tactics against the upper castes. South Africa's reconciliation should be an example before us.

Polytheism/Idolatry: Philosopher S.N. Dasgupta says in his introduction to Volume I of *The Cultural Heritage of India*:

The Vedas reveal different strata of religious and philosophical culture. There are passages which indicate that the Vedic people worshipped the nature gods in their diversity; there are also passages which show that there was a tendency to exaggerate the power and influence of one or other of the gods over others. This has been styled as henotheism by Max Müller. There is another stratum which seems to encourage the performance of sacrifices.... In another stratum we find the performance of sacrifice being replaced by different kinds of meditation.

There is also monotheism (ref. the last line of the 'Nāsadiya Sūkta') and even monism (ref. the 'Puruṣa Sūkta') in the *Ṛg-Veda Samhitā*. The appearance of so-called polytheism in the Veda-based and Vedānta-dominated religion, popularly called Hinduism, is an evolution influenced by a few stimulating factors: (i) the ancient non-Aryan cult of Śiva, (ii) the emerging cult of the Buddha, (iii) the cult of Kṛṣṇa spreading from the nucleus of Mathura-Vrindaban, and (iv) Tibetan Buddhism exerting a back pressure. A restructuring of divinities came into being. Along with the propagation of the Epics, the adoration of Rāma and of Kṛṣṇa came to the fore.

Each of the Hindu gods and goddesses which are in vogue now is the result of anthropomorphization of some divine aspect or aspects. This is done to heighten the attraction towards God. **Worshipping an idol as God is idolatry, but worshipping God using the idol as a symbol is not idolatry.** Hindus have produced and are still producing an astonishing galaxy of saints, capable of com-

muning with God; and many have achieved this by beginning their inner life with *pūjā*, the Hindu liturgy to honour a deity. Swami Vivekananda was the first Hindu to explain this point to a western audience through his paper on Hinduism read at Chicago. We shall quote from an article on Sri Ramakrishna, contributed to the *Theistic Review Quarterly* (dated October 1879) by Mr P.C. Majumdar, the representative of Brahmo Samaj in the first Parliament of Religions:

But how is it possible that he has such a fervent regard for all the Hindu deities together? What is the secret of his singular eclecticism? To him each of these deities is a force, an incarnated principle tending to reveal the supreme relation of the soul to that eternal and formless Being who is unchangeable in his blessedness and the Light of wisdom.

Take for instance Śiva. The saint views and realizes Śiva as the incarnation of contemplativeness and yoga. Forgetful of all worldly care and concern, merged and absorbed in samadhi, in the meditation of the ineffable perfections of the supreme Brahman, insensible to pain and privation, toil and loneliness, ever joyful in the blessedness of divine communion, calm, silent, serene, immovable like the Himalayas where his abode is.

Excessive other-worldliness: According to the Hindu Lawgiver Manu, enjoyment is a natural propensity, but reckless enjoyment brings ruin to the society and to the individual. So, worldly enjoyment must have certain rules to guide its course; these rules constitute dharma. But if one's mind is able to turn away from enjoyment, that will give a *mahāphala*, a tremendous result, namely, liberation from the clutches of nature. So the dharmic goal set for most human beings is to produce satiation through enjoyment, which will then generate the spiritual quest for the cultivation of what is called 'other-worldliness'. There is no doubt that detachment is necessary for spiritual progress. Our scriptures are eloquent about this point. But **there is ordinarily no short cut to the path of renunciation.** This vital message

of the *Gītā* was forgotten when the Buddhists were in a spree of opening monasteries and filling each one with thousands of members. As a result, on the one hand social duties were partially neglected, and on the other hand monasteries got polluted. Swami Vivekananda called this the greatest national blunder. Putting *mokṣa* as the immediate goal for the entire population is one of the reasons of social decline in India and in many Buddhist lands. The vestige of this legacy from India's Buddhistic past is still there among the Hindus.

Tying up with one homeland: There is a popular notion that Hinduism is the religion of the natives of India who have not been converted to other religions. But history proves otherwise. **Many Greeks, like Heliodoros, adopted the Indians' religious ways.** Scythians, Parthians and members of the Yueh-chi tribe entered into post-Buddha India and were absorbed into the Hindu population as Śakas, Pahlavas and Kuśānas. The Zoroastrians from Persia were inducted as 'Maga Brāhmaṇas'. Similarly, the white Huns and Abhiras coming from the west and people from Thailand coming from the east were absorbed. In the outward direction, Hindu settlers in Southeast Asia and the Indonesian archipelago once Hinduized a vast population of the indigenous people in those lands. Within India, millions of Buddhists and Jains re-entered into the faith of their Hindu ancestors in the post-Śaṅkara centuries. Unfortunately, however, at a later period the Hindu society developed a marked attitude of exclusiveness. Swami Vivekananda used to say that when Hindus invented the word *mleccha* (suggestive of the inferiority of the foreigners) and stopped crossing the seas, they fell. Happily, the original attitude of openness has been regaining ground in the Hindu society since mid-19th century. And, in the 20th century, thousands of western people have accepted Hinduism informally or formally through the matrimonial link or through the spiritual link with a master.

Absence of creedal clarity: Hindus never had any supreme religious leader. They did not light the fire of inquisitions, not did they hold councils to determine the boundary between orthodox and heterodox views. On the contrary, holding a highly particular opinion concerning a religious issue was regarded as the sign of a spiritual genius. Therefore, there were mushroom growths of sects, curbed a little by the process of debate.

General de Gaulle said about France: 'How can you have unity in a nation which consumes more than 300 varieties of cheese?' Likewise, disunity existed in Hinduism also. Then the first great synthesis came through the enunciation of the *Gītā*'s message. And the second grand synthesis was achieved through the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna in the 19th century. **Swami Vivekananda was the first Hindu to discover the common basis of the creeds of the Hindu sects. These are: (i)**

veneration of the Vedas, (ii) theory of reincarnation and karma, (iii) theory of the cyclic creation, sustenance and destruction of the cosmos, (iv) goal perceived as liberation from suffering and access to bliss, and (v) acceptance of diverse spiritual paths and the individual's right to choose one or more among them.

It is the *avasthā-adhikāra* doctrine (*avasthā* means the level of evolution and the corresponding aptitude for a spiritual discipline; *adhikāra* means the competence of a person to take up a particularly higher course)—as illustrated through the spiritual ministration of Sri Ramakrishna—that helps the modern man to comprehend the seemingly contradictory approaches in different areas of Hinduism, or to appreciate the life of an aspirant who takes up several of such approaches. □

(Next Issue: Positive Points of Hinduism)

The Greatness of Vedanta

'Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of religion: the Vedanta, applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India, is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e. Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe, is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism. The Advaita, as applied in its Yoga-perception form, is Buddhism etc. Now by religion is meant the Vedanta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings, and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that although the philosophy is the same, the Shaktas, Shaivas, etc apply it each to their own special cult and *forms*.

Now name and form constitute the universe. A wave in the ocean is a wave, only in so far as it is bound by name and form. ... This name-and-form is called Maya, and the water is Brahman. The wave was nothing but water all the time, yet as a *wave* it had the name and form. ... But because the name and form can never be *separated*, they can never be said to *exist*. Yet they are not *zero*. This is called Maya,' says **Swami Vivekananda**.

The Great Devotee

His biographer, Keshavadas, laments that had this saint been born in Tamil Nadu, he would have been acclaimed as one of the Alvars. But, having taken birth in a remote area in Karnataka, he isn't known to many.

The followers of Sri Ramanuja, called Sri Vaishnavas, have made immense contribution to the wealth of spirituality of India and the world. Through their natural trait of devotion to Vishnu, through their philosophy, through their devotional writings, and through their cultural heritage, the Sri Vaishnavas have made a unique place for themselves in the world of religion. However, in spite of all these contributions, not many Sri Vaishnavas are well known: most of them have been forgotten. Of such forgotten ones is the great saint from Karnataka, Keshava Iyengar.

Keshava Iyengar was born about five centuries ago in Belur (of Keshava Temple fame), Karnataka. His parents were an ordinary couple, given to worship, prayer, etc. They never imagined that they would have a 'headache' as their son. As they called him, he was more a *jada* or insentient than a living being because, for all 'practical' purposes, he was insentient. He cared little for what was going on around him. As the people of his locality said of him, if even a tiger roared near him, the stony mind of Keshava wouldn't melt.

Keshava Iyengar's sacred-thread ceremony was somehow completed, and arrangements were made for his Vedic studies. Attempts were also made to train him up in the traditional job of priesthood. But all the same, the boy remained somewhat peculiar. His parents couldn't understand their son's ways at all. He did virtually nothing worthwhile all through the day, according to common

knowledge. All that he would do was take bath in the river long before sunrise, go to the temple, sit in a solitary corner, and meditate. After some time, he would sing the Tamil devotional *pāsuras* before the deity. Of his favourite hymns, the *Mukunda Mālā Stotra* and the *Drāviḍa Prabandhas* in Tamil were important. Hours would go by, but he would continue singing these hymns in a melodious tone. He would sing so well that it appeared as though the beautifully carved stone images of the temple would become alive to his music. His other favourite pastime was preparing impressive garlands for the Lord. It was with immense happiness that he would run about, collect flowers, and prepare garlands for Lord Keshava. It was Keshava Iyengar's great joy to salute elders. Whenever he saw some elderly person on the street, he would prostrate before him with devotion. These elders, though knowing the boy's unworldly ways, *had* to bless him.

Unlike the other lads of his age, he never played or cared for any entertainment, delicacies, fun, etc. But suppose he missed partaking of the offered food (*prasāda*) of Lord Keshava, he would worry greatly. And the other things he never missed were the holy water and flowers offered to Lord Keshava. A handful of *prasāda* someday, and that day he wouldn't go home at all. Seeing the boy's lifestyle, the priest of the temple would provide him with the *prasāda* regularly. But along with the *prasāda*, there would be some pep talk also: 'Why are you like this, my boy? Why don't you be like the other children in Belur? Why can't you lead a normal life? What has happened to you? Are you worried because you aren't getting married? You spend all your time here, staring at the image of Keshava as

if you are seeing something new there. Give up such foolish habits. Lead a normal life.'

The rich landlord of Belur also had asked him once: 'Hey, what's wrong with you? Tell us if you have any problem. We shall set it right.' Keshava smiled and replied: 'It's beyond all of you to remove my worry. You can't even understand my problem.' The landlord had laughed aloud: 'You arrogant brahmin! You talk as if you alone have lived on this earth, and the rest were born yesterday? Come on, tell us about your wonderful problem...' Keshava said: 'I want to live and play with Lord Krishna always. I want to be his servant, his friend, like the cowherd boys of Brindavan. Will you help me achieve this?' 'Strange boy with a strange desire,' thought the landlord and left him alone.

All this appears good for some time. But a boy doesn't remain a boy for long: he grows up. He has responsibilities. When Keshava Iyengar wouldn't care for the 'normal' things and events of life, when he became more and more isolated from the surroundings, when his sole concern became Lord Krishna and how to please Him, his parents became terribly worried. Scolding, beating, counseling—nothing was of any use.

The usual, practical medicine that worldly people can think of was suggested. 'Get him married and see how he will come around to our way of life.' When his mother approached Keshava with this proposal, Keshava flared up. 'How can you speak in such a manner?' he asked. But his father became adamant. He had had enough of Keshava: the boy had become the talk of the town. He had to do something. So he managed to imprison Keshava in the house, and arranged for his marriage in a hurry.

There's always a scapegoat ready when such proposals are made. In a not-so-far-away village, there lived a Sri Vaishnava couple, who had an eight-year-old daughter called Soumya Nayaki. Keshava Iyengar's father went there, discussed the marriage, and the marriage was fixed. One day, against all his

wishes, Keshava Iyengar of 17/18 years was married to the eight-year-old Devi Soumya Nayaki. As soon as the marriage ceremony was over, his father breathed a sigh of relief and began to move about happily. That was the moment when Keshava ran away from the marriage-seat straight to the temple.

When the marriage party saw that Keshava wasn't returning even when it was late evening, they came in search of him to the temple. There he was, immersed in the Lord's contemplation. They somehow brought him home that day. Amidst all this commotion, the girl's parents and the girl herself realized that something was wrong, and that they had invited trouble by agreeing to this marriage.

Since that day, Keshava stopped looking even at his own mother, because he thought that it was she who was responsible for the marriage. He, of course, cared little for his poor little wife. Days passed by, but he never uttered a single word to her. He never even looked at her. The girl herself was extremely sincere and devoted. Unknown to anyone and unseen by anyone, she would shed tears before her personal deity, Krishna. Whether her husband cared or not, whether he thought she was dead or alive, it was of little concern for her: she went on serving him and the family as much as she could. Her parents-in-law were mute observers of the situation. But they couldn't drive away their only son.

One day Keshava's father showered a torrent of harsh words on his son: 'You think you are a great devotee, don't you? You think you have become a Shukadeva of *Bhāgavata*, isn't it? If you were really a devotee, you wouldn't depend on your father's wealth for livelihood. You wouldn't behave so rudely with the poor girl...' The result? No response. When things became unbearable to both Keshava's and Soumya Nayaki's parents, Keshava's father decided to take a drastic step one day.

(Next issue: *The Drastic Step*)

Book Reviews

AN INTRODUCTION TO METAPHYSICS:
By Martin Heidegger. Translated by
Ralph Manheim. Published by Motilal
Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road,
Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007. 1999.
Pp. xv+214. Rs.225.

Concern for the individual is the foundation of the philosophy of existentialism. This concern has found expression in the revolt against the rationalistic idea of order as well as the mechanistic idea of modern life. Side by side with this philosophical development, contemporary art and literature have also shown a tendency to reveal the agony and the desolation of modern man. To quote William Barrett, 'The world pictured by the modern artist is, like the world meditated upon by the existential philosopher, a world where man is a stranger.' The human being in the present-day world is in despair; he is lonely, anguished and always lives in the all-pervading shadow of nothingness. He will have to search out the meaning of his life in such a world, where there is no hope and where, as Nietzsche had said, 'God is dead.' Existentialist philosophers have also drawn a similar picture of such a person and they try to show how he can move towards his destiny of authenticity through an uninterrupted bitter struggle. In this regard existentialism can be called a philosophy of modern man, where man is revealed in the condition of his 'thrown-ness' on the thorns of life.

To an existentialist, the existence of the individual person is the highest truth. To him, existence is more important than essence, for in essence we are not able to find out our individuality. Even to an individual, it is his existence that is a greater truth. It is for this reason that existentialists regard the existence of the individual to be most important. Heidegger divides existence into three levels—man, the world, and things of use. Man does not realize his existence in his day-to-day life. As such he has to take over the responsibility for all his actions alone by separating himself completely from everyday activity.

Heidegger refused to identify himself with the label of existentialism, though it cannot be denied that his analysis of human existence initiated the 'movement' in the 20th century. Being historically-minded like Hegel, he always tried to relate philosophical problems with the thoughts of historical philosophers. But he was unsympathetic in his

treatment of philosophers like Kant and Husserl. He thought of Kant as the philosopher who had attempted the construction of metaphysics in the dimension of human existence. In a similar way he complained about Husserl's particular concern with essences. Heidegger argued that conceptual analysis is not sufficient to give us knowledge of what actually exists and what does not. Unlike Husserl, Heidegger refused to neglect 'being' by bracketing existence and by concerning himself with essences.

Heidegger's main contention has been to lay a foundation for metaphysics. The very first line of his book *An Introduction to Metaphysics* raises the fundamental question: 'Why are there Essents rather than nothing?' Many amongst us never encounter this question. But the question looms in moments of great despair, says Heidegger. Nietzsche once said (*Werke*, 7: 269): 'A philosopher is a man who never ceases to experience, see, hear, suspect, hope and dream extraordinary things....' This questioning does not lie along the way so that we bump into it one day unexpectedly. The same Nietzsche said: 'Philosophy...is a voluntary living amid ice and mountain heights' (*Werke*, 15: 2). Now we may say with Heidegger, 'To philosophize is an extraordinary inquiry into the extra-ordinary.'

In the age of the earliest and crucial unfolding of Western philosophy among the Greeks, the 'essent' was called 'physis'. But with the Latin translation, the original meaning of the Greek word 'physis' was thrust aside, and consequently, the actual force of the Greek word got destroyed. Heidegger rightly points out that the misuse of language in idle talk, in slogans and phrases, destroys our authentic relation to things. But the great begins the great, maintains itself only through the free recurrence of greatness within it, and if it is great, it ends also in greatness. So it is with the philosophy of the Greeks—it ended in greatness with Aristotle.

The problem of Being arose as soon as Heidegger started meditating with Brentano on the Aristotelian meaning of the word 'being'. In this search he became fascinated by the word 'is', which applies to everything. But it does not cause any damage to the unity of itself. In Heidegger's opinion, Being is not a being, because it is that which makes beings present to man, and men to each other. It is the nearest to man because it makes man what he is. It allows him to enter into comportment with other beings. But it is farthest removed from him, because it is not a being, due to his own structure,

which can comport himself. It is the domain of openness, it is the lighting process by which beings are lit up. Thus it is from Being, Heidegger thinks, that metaphysics derives all its vigour.

After all, the success or failure of Heidegger's philosophical endeavour is to be measured with reference to the answer he gives us to the question of Being. He asserts that the understanding of Being is the basic problem not only of philosophy but of all human enterprises and of human beings in general. Heidegger is perhaps right when he thinks that the tensions of modern culture are based on our failure to apprehend the problem of Being. Maybe there are many presuppositions and prejudices about Being. But these should not make us think that the problem as set forth by Heidegger does not make sense. Towards the end of the first section of the book, Heidegger has asserted the truth that the destiny of language is grounded in a nation's *relation to being*, and the question of being will involve us deeply in the question of language.

Heidegger has left no stone unturned to discuss in detail the grammar and etymology of the word 'Being' in his second section of the book. But none of his attempts have been able to determine the actual meaning of the word. Consequently, the word 'being' sounds empty and carries no sense at all.

But, suddenly, the fact that the word 'being' is an empty word for us takes on an entirely different face, says Heidegger. If we reflect more closely on the word, it ultimately turns out that despite all the blur and mixture and universality of its meaning we mean something definite by it (Section III). This definiteness is so unique in its kind that we must even say this: 'The being which belongs to every essent whatsoever, and which is thus dispersed among all that is most current and familiar, is more unique than all else' (p. 79). If being thus represents what is most unique and determinate, the word 'being' cannot be empty. And in truth it is never empty. Regarding what we understand, we say, 'It has a meaning.' Indeed, to experience and understand being as the most worthy of problems, to inquire specially after being, means nothing other than to ask after the meaning of being itself.

Section IV of the book deals with the 'Limitation of Being'. Here, Heidegger has grasped the true problem of 'being'—it is what we do not know; and what we know *authentically* we know only *questioningly*. After all, to know how to question means to know how to wait, even a whole lifetime. But we are living in an age which regards as real only what goes fast, neglecting thereby the right time, and the right perseverance. In the words of Heidegger, we find out that this privileged question 'why' has its ground in a leap through which man thrusts away all the previous security, whether real or imagined,

of his life. After all, the neglect of this question and the subsequent 'falling way from Being' is responsible not only for the unhappy state of metaphysics, but of decline of human culture in general.

The author has added a useful Index, which enhances the value of the book. This long-awaited Indian edition will be of great help to students and scholars, specially for their many dissertations on Heidegger. Motilal Banarsidass deserves compliments for such an important and illuminating publication.

Prof Amalendu Chakraborty

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**TOWARDS SURRENDER—A UNIVERSAL
PSALM: Published by The President,
Ramakrishna Math, PO Vyttila, Kochi,
Ernakulam Dt, Kerala 682019. 2000.
Pp. 61. Rs.45.**

Swami Gabhiranandaji, the compiler, says in the Introduction: 'Towards Surrender is a universal psalm which could be sung within minutes. The hymns are selected from the basic texts of India, solemnly repeated by sages through the centuries.' *Samarpayami* is the first part, consisting of five sections. There are beautiful passages chosen from the *Īsā* and *Māṇḍūkya* Upaniṣads, *Śruti Gītā*, etc. Among other things are Swami Vivekananda's 'The Song of the Sannyasin' and choice selections from *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. An informative Notes is added towards the end of the book. A good collection, this book, and an inspiring reading.

BOOK RECEIVED

Karma Yog aur Uski Sadhana
(Hindi), by Sri Ramratna Gupta. Published by Smt Maya Gupta, 'Ramayan', 628 Sanjay Marg, Patel Nagar, Muzaffarnagar 251001.

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

News and Reports

NEW MATH CENTRE

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math has been started in Sydney, Australia, under the name *Vedanta Centre of Sydney*. Its address is: Vedanta Centre of Sydney, 21 Myrna Road, Strathfield, NSW 2135, Australia (Phone: 61-2-8746-0272). Swami Sridharanandaji has been appointed head of the centre.

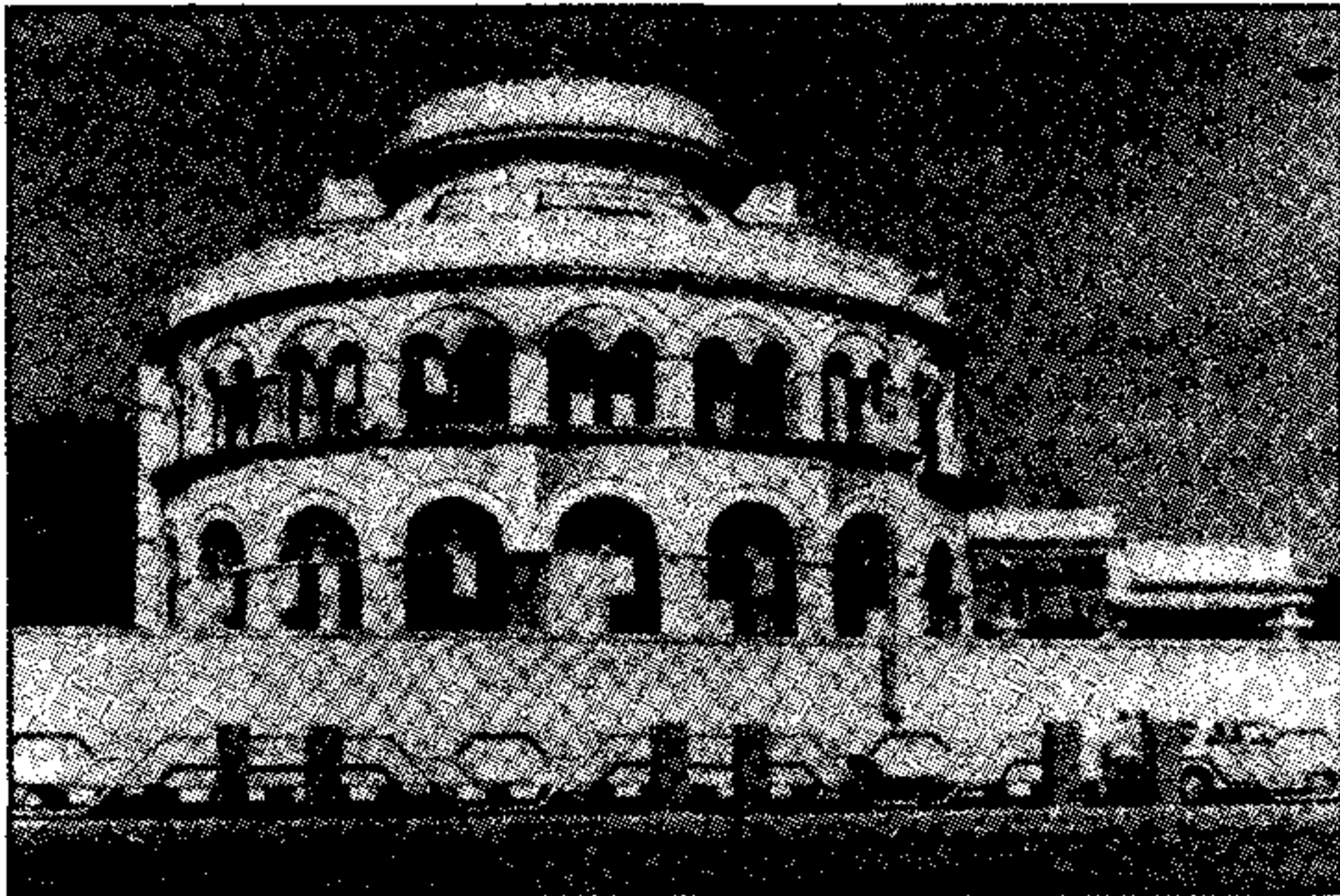
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ACTIVITIES DURING 1999-2000

The 91st Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, 10 December 2000. The following is a synopsis of the Governing Body's report of the Mission's activities during 1999-2000.

Amidst the important developments during the year, the opening of a new branch at Indore, the laying of foundation-stones for an educational complex at Asansol and a new school building at Sargachhi, and the inauguration of a new school building at Ramharipur, an auditorium at Narainpur and an annexe to the school building at Deoghar deserve special mention.

Under the Ramakrishna Math, new temples of Sri Ramakrishna were dedicated at Chennai and Lucknow centres and foundation-stone was laid for the Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence at Hyderabad. The first phase of the Vivekananda Cultural Heritage of India Exhibition at Vivekanandar Illam, Chennai, was inaugurated. A new centre was started at Vyttila (Ernakulam).

During the year the Mission undertook exten-



Vivekanandar Illam

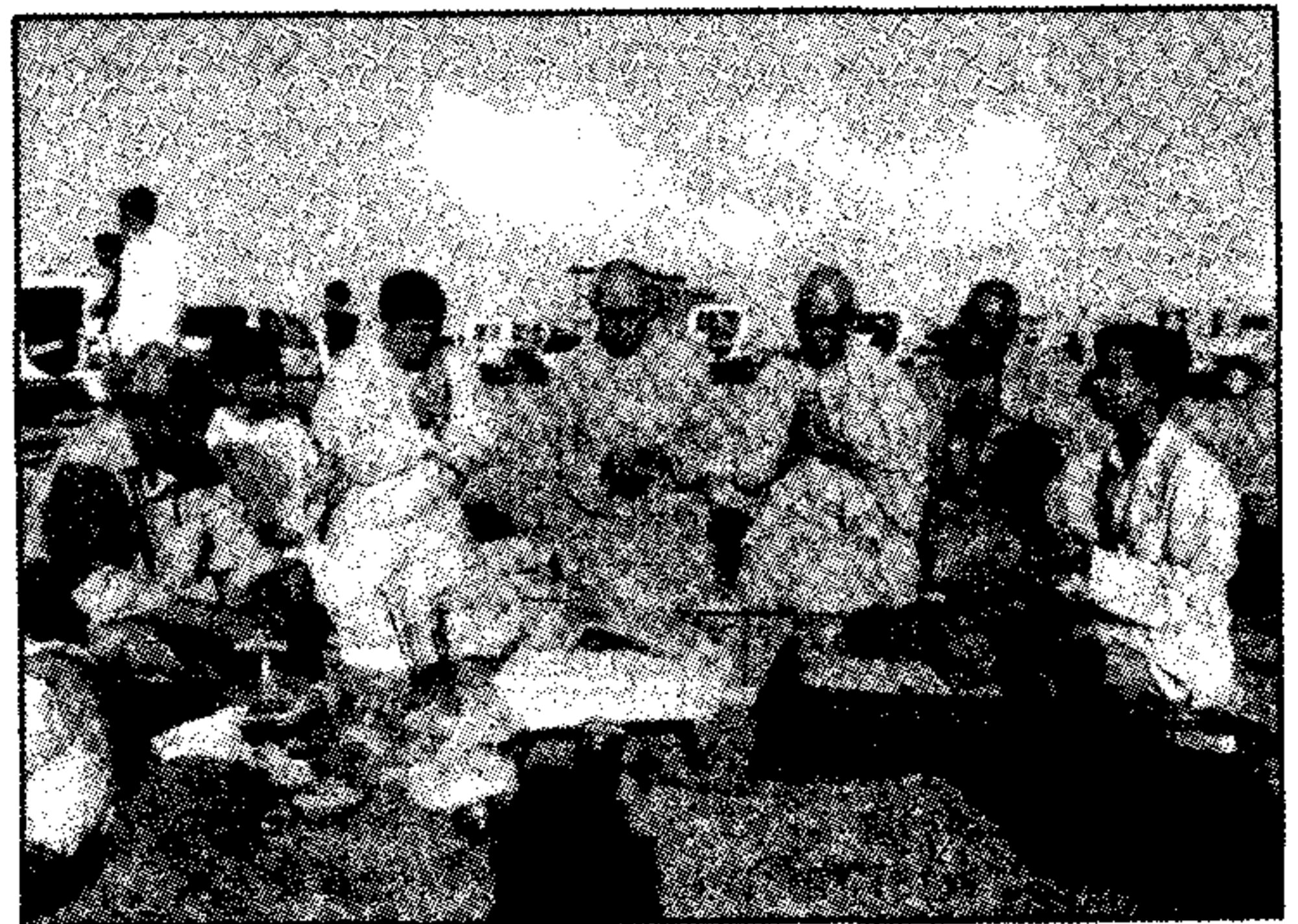
sive relief and rehabilitation programmes in several parts of the country involving an expenditure of about Rs 5.28 crores, benefiting nearly 4 lakh people in more than 800 villages. A major rehabilitation programme has been started in two cyclone-affected areas of Orissa.

Welfare work by way of scholarships for poor students, pecuniary help to old, sick and destitute people amounted to Rs 2.19 crores.

Medical service was rendered to more than 51 lakh people through nine hospitals and 108 dispensaries, including mobile ones, and the expenditure incurred was Rs 23.33 crores.

Through our educational institutions—from kindergarten to postgraduate level—nearly 1.07 lakh students were taught, among whom more than 31,000 were girls. A sum of Rs 68.60 crores was spent for educational work.

A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken with a total expenditure of Rs 8.88 crores.



*Inauguration of a rehabilitation project
by our Porbandar centre*